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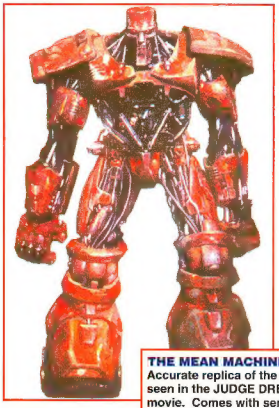

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NEW DARK KNIGHTS

With this latest film continuing the legend, Bob Kane may have created "Batman Forever."

By WILL MURRAY

Batman Forever is *not* a sequel," insists Batman creator Bob Kane. "It's an original. It's like it has *never* been done before. It's a brand new ballgame. It's a new actor playing Batman, which makes it different right off. The whole flavor is different. The movie has a different look to it. The script is lighter. It still has heavy moments; it's *not* the TV show, but it has great wit. Batman has plenty of action and as Bruce Wayne he's on-screen quite a bit. I can't rave enough about Joel Schumacher as a director. I have very high hopes for it. I think *Batman Forever* will have a bigger opening weekend than the first two. I really do."

Kane is plainly enthusiastic. Over the last half-century, he has seen Caped Crusaders come and go. And he believes the newest actor to don the ebony cloak may be the truest of all.

"Val Kilmer *really* fell into the role," Kane notes. "He's very Batmanesque. As Bruce Wayne, he's ultra-suave. As Batman, he has a lighter uniform. He's able to move around when he does his own stunts."

Kane is very clear that he intends no slight to the previous Batman, Michael Keaton, by his words. "I really like them both. Without knocking anything that Michael Keaton did—he did marvelously with what he had—I think Val is a little more handsome and more Bruce Wayne-ish. I can't praise Michael enough for what he did, but I would say that Val has an edge with his physical prowess. He's more like the Bruce Wayne that *I* draw."

More than just the man behind the mask has changed, according to Kane. "Nicole Kidman plays a psychiatrist who's trying to get through Bruce Wayne's angst," he explains. "This time they try to examine his angst to find out why he has this fear of being Batman. He's reluctant to be a crusader. It all stems from his mother and father. When they died, he felt guilt that maybe it was because of *him*."

Batman Forever reintroduces the character of Robin—not seen in the flesh since the heyday of the *Batman* TV show 30 years ago—to the live-action arena.

"Robin has a very big following," Kane observes. "We got a lot of flak on the last two films from the younger generation, who felt that Robin *should* be a staple. It's like Sherlock Holmes without Dr. Watson. I like it dark and brooding, basically without Robin—as I had Batman in the first year. He was a

Photos Courtesy Bob Kane

Life is like a wheel—it all comes around. More than 50 years ago, Bob Kane created the characters that grace the screen in *Batman Forever*.

loner and more of a vigilante, dark and mysterious. With Robin, it lightens up the tone. But this Robin wears a uniform more akin to the Batman movie costume. So it's dark. Chris O'Donnell is a *tremendous* actor. I loved him in *Scent of a Woman*. He comes in about three-quarters into the film with the circus, so we have the origin brought to life. Val Kilmer and Chris O'Donnell work very well together."

The new Robin is no Boy Wonder. He's older and tougher than the cocky Dick Grayson of the 1940s. "They wanted to give Robin an edge," says Kane. "It fits the script. He's a circus kid to begin with. Circus kids are not namby-pamby. When you ride the rails, you become hardened. He's incensed that his parents were murdered by Two-Face's forces when they came into the big top. Dick Grayson is a very angry young man when Bruce picks him up. And somehow he blames his parents' death on Bruce, because Batman also intervened in the mayhem, and somehow Batman's interference was the cause of his parents falling to their deaths. It's a convoluted scene. It's convoluted in the mind of Dick Grayson."

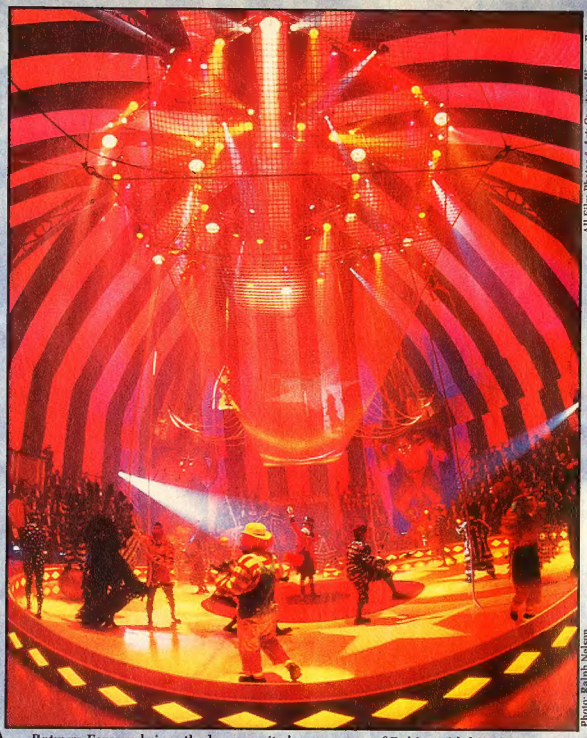

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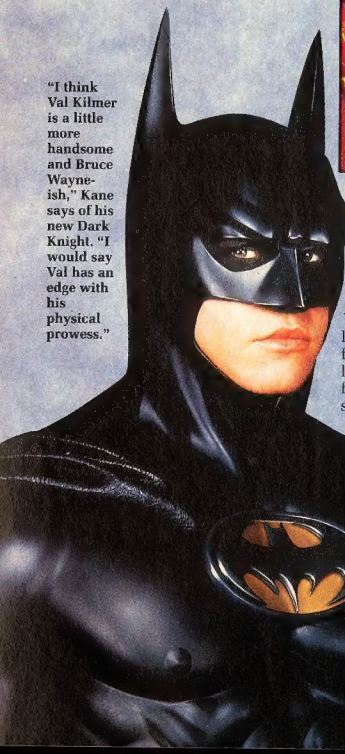
Photo: Ralph Nelson

***Batman Forever* brings the long-awaited appearance of Robin, with his circus tragedy origin intact.**



"I think Val Kilmer is a little more handsome and Bruce Wayne-ish," Kane says of his new Dark Knight. "I would say Val has an edge with his physical prowess."

Kane admits to being shocked at his first brush with the new incarnation of Robin. "I thought I would see the Chris O'Donnell of *Scent of a Woman*," he recalls. "He had blondish hair and was very sweet-looking, very nice and genteel. When I finally met him on the set, he had the leather on. He looked like he came from a motorcycle gang. And they stuck an earring in his ear. I didn't like *that* too much. But he *doesn't* have the earring as Robin."

Earliest reports had the new Robin played by a black actor. In fact, at one point, there were discussions about including a Robin—possibly to be played by Marlon Wayans—in the previous film, *Batman Returns*. "I'm not bigoted, but I didn't think it would fit," Kane says flatly. "I'm all for black actors when they fit the role. This role has the tradition of starting out as Caucasian and it followed through on the TV show. I think the fans know and accept the origin. By changing it into, say, a Japanese Robin or a black Robin, it alters the tonality of the conception. I don't like to see my origin changed that much. That was my only objection when I first heard of a black Robin."

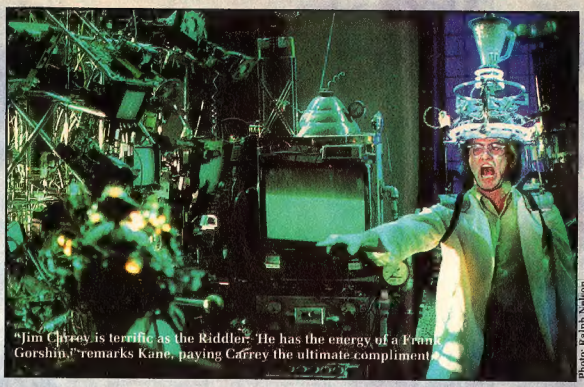
Talk of a possible black Robin naturally leads to the subject of Billy Dee Williams, who played a pre-Two-Face Harvey Dent in *Batman*, only to be succeeded by Tommy Lee Jones in *Batman Forever*.

"They promised him the role," Kane recalls, "but I guess they wanted to stick more to the original origin. And they wanted big name value for the actor. Tommy Lee Jones is very hot today, he's in almost every movie out. He really gets into the role, but he doesn't play it overly sinister. He does

not play it campy. It's right in the middle. And he won't frighten the children as Danny DeVito possibly did."

As far as the film's other villain is concerned, Kane pays the actor what he feels is the ultimate compliment. "Jim Carrey is *terrific* as the Riddler," he remarks. "He has the energy of a Frank Gorshin."

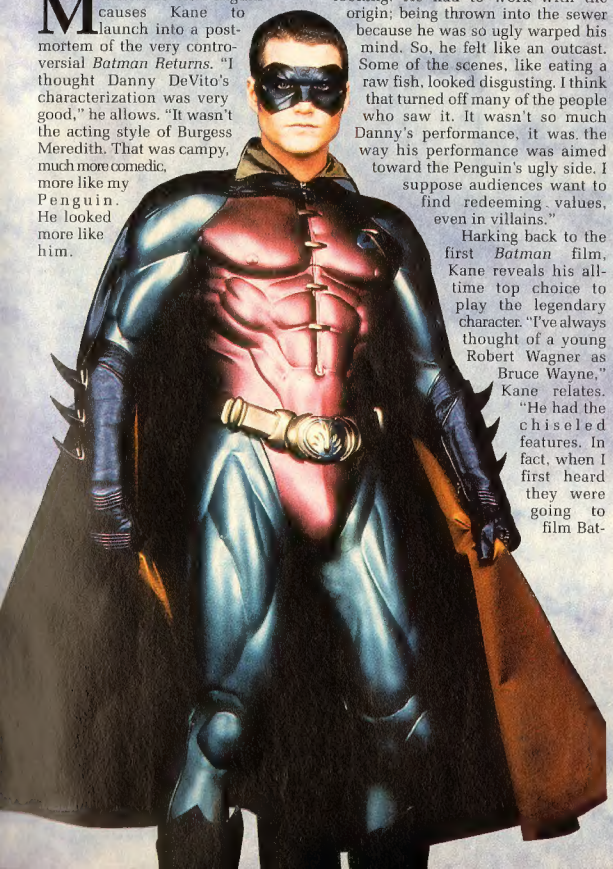
Kane himself appears in the film with Carrey and Kane's actress wife, Elizabeth Sanders, who plays Gossip Gerty. "I have a cameo with Elizabeth at a party, disco dancing right behind Jim Carrey and Nicole Kidman," he reveals. "Of course, I had a lot of the extras trying to upstage me and my wife, as extras do. Elizabeth's a centerpiece in the film. You can't miss her. It's a small part but certainly more renowned, and it'll be more noticed than the walk-on she had in the Penguin movie."



"Jim Carrey is terrific as the Riddler. 'He has the energy of a Frank Gorshin,' remarks Kane, paying Carrey the ultimate compliment."

Photo: Ralph Nelson

Mention of the Penguin causes Kane to launch into a postmortem of the very controversial *Batman Returns*. "I thought Danny DeVito's characterization was very good," he allows. "It wasn't the acting style of Burgess Meredith. That was campy, much more comedic, more like my Penguin. He looked more like him. He wasn't ominous. Tim Burton wanted the Penguin to be dark and evil-looking. He had to work with the origin; being thrown into the sewer because he was so ugly warped his mind. So, he felt like an outcast. Some of the scenes, like eating a raw fish, looked disgusting. I think that turned off many of the people who saw it. It wasn't so much Danny's performance, it was the way his performance was aimed toward the Penguin's ugly side. I suppose audiences want to find redeeming values, even in villains."



Harking back to the first *Batman* film, Kane reveals his all-time top choice to play the legendary character. "I've always thought of a young Robert Wagner as Bruce Wayne," Kane relates. "He had the chiseled features. In fact, when I first heard they were going to film Batman in '87 or '88, I thought immediately of Robert Wagner. He has a husky build. They wouldn't have had to go with a big uniform to fill him out. When I mentioned Wagner [who made countless movies in the '50s and early '60s], they said he was a television actor—whatever *that* means. In Hollywood, they characterize you with what you've done lately, and he may have been a shade too old for the role.

"Tim Burton didn't want anybody that handsome, believe it or not," Kane adds. "He wanted an ordinary Bruce Wayne to become an extraordinary Batman, if you can understand the division. He said if somebody was so strong and tall and handsome to begin with, why would he have to get into a bat costume? He would go out and fight crime as he was. So, he wanted the opposite. Tim is very quirky in his perceptions—some of them are very good, of course."

Kane isn't shy about voicing his opinions. "Being the creator," he says, "I'm very perceptive about Batman, and very critical. If I don't like something, I say so. I did critique the script as the creative consultant, and made objections. They listened to perhaps 30 to 40 percent and cut out scenes that didn't work."

Asked to be specific, Kane expands: "I thought they could have delved into Two-Face's psyche more—the angst that a young, handsome district attorney would feel, having his face scarred with acid by a mob boss on the prosecution stand. I wanted a scene interjected showing him in his lair with all the mirrors covered. Obviously, he couldn't look at his image, with one side looking like Mr. Hyde. He lives with these two dingalings, Sugar and Spice. He comes home as Two-Face

"Chris O'Donnell is a *tremendous* actor," Kane raves about his Boy Wonder. "They wanted to give Robin an edge." They did.

and he sees one mirror has the cover moved aside and they're making up in the mirror. He goes berserk. So, he lunges at them with the knife and they think they're going to be killed. Instead, he moves over to his painting, like Dorian Gray, and he starts slashing one side of his face with the knife.

"I thought it added more dimension to the character rather than, 'OK, here's Two-Face.' And Joel liked it. But it's hard for writers to change a script once it's written in stone. They alluded to the fact that he had his face scarred by gangsters. I think there might be a flashback scene showing the mobster throwing the acid.

"I wanted more touches to add characterization," Kane continues. "When Dick Grayson discovers that Bruce Wayne is really Batman, he watches Alfred go through a secret door. So, he slides down a banister and jumps into the Batcave. He confronts Alfred there, and you would think he would look around in awe. It's the first time he has seen the Batcave, and the first realization that Bruce Wayne is Batman. You would think there would be some reaction other than the look on his face. And they cut the scene. I wanted to see more of his reactions."

With only the third film, five classic Batman foes have returned. As talk of another film begins to percolate, it's only natural to ask, if not who's next, who's *left*?

"We've used up most of the top line of known villains," Kane admits. "I guess Man-Bat is left. And with him it would be a horror film and I'm not sure they want to go that way. The Scarecrow is a very good villain. He's from the past. If they want to dig into some of the TV villains, there's Mr. Freeze and Mad Hatter. So, I imagine they would have to delve into the ones left over or create new ones.

"I think there could possibly be a sequel with the Joker, because he was so good. And *Catwoman* will probably be a movie in itself with Michelle Pfeiffer, because she really stole *Batman Returns*."

As for the latest on that much-awaited Catwoman film, Kane can add little to what's already known. "It's in the talking stage. They're working on a script. It's a little ways off. It may come before another chapter—I don't want to say another sequel—they're trying to do original *Batmans* now. They *don't* want to call them sequels."

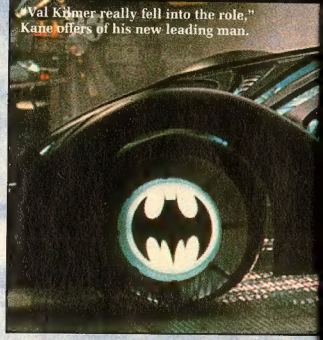
Not content to be carried on the shoulders of the character he created almost 60 years ago, Kane for the first time reveals his latest silver screen inspiration.

Two-Face has the distinct honor of living "with these two dingalings, Sugar and Spice." The ex-Harvey Dent must be in condiment heaven.

Design & Layout: Jim McLernon

Photo: Ralph Nelson

"Val Kilmer really fell into the role," Kane offers of his new leading man.



For the third time around, the Bat-saga has taken on some new trappings, including the redesigned Batmobile.

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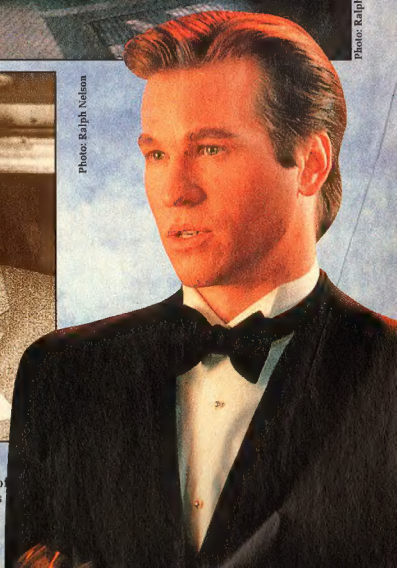
Photo: Ralph Nelson

"I've created a new vigilante crusader called Silver Fox. *Silver Fox* is a finished script. I created the book, the original character, and Elizabeth co-wrote it with me. It looks like we're very close to a production deal, which I can't mention at the moment. I'm superstitious. It's a different kind of superhero. It's *not* Batman. It's as original as Batman—I can say that—with a tremendous twist ending to it. It's a very exciting script. I show the angst of a superhero, what he thinks, his insecurities. I get into his psyche more than just saying here's a guy running around. And his costume isn't the typical '40s skintight outfit of the comic books. He's not a comic book character. He's more like a Zorro—very loose shirt, a sash, loose pants and a silver mask that looks like a fox. So, it's quite different."

The choice of actor to play his new creation is something on which Kane has very firm ideas. "The part calls for a man with a purity to his personality.

Photo: Ralph Nelson



This new Bruce Wayne (Kilmer, right) is the closest to Kane's original vision. "I've always thought of a young Robert Wagner (above) as Bruce Wayne," Kane reveals.

rather than an Arnold Schwarzenegger, Sylvester Stallone or Mel Gibson type," he explains. "There has to be another way to go. I would like to see a Tom Cruise play him. We're looking for actors now.

"It has a marvelous supervillain, akin to the Joker. He's the world's greatest escape artist and magician. Perhaps a Martin Landau would have that quality. And Elizabeth will be playing a major role in it."

A torrent of Batman product continues to fill comics and video racks, all but overwhelming his creator's ability to keep up. One spinoff that Kane singles out for special praise is *The Adventures of Batman & Robin* animated TV show.

"I thought it was great," he enthuses. "Absolutely. It won two Emmys. It's Nouveau. The art is extremely modern and tomorrow. I love the animation, particularly the film, *Mask of the Phantasm*. The movie didn't make a splash because they didn't advertise it. With the love story, it *could* have been a live motion picture."

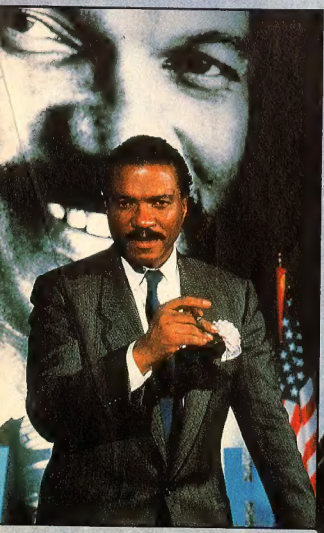
Returning to the formative days of the character in *Batman* and *Detective Comics* in the 1940s, Kane vividly recalls his main editors Mort Weisinger and Jack Schiff. "Mort was a writer. He was an intellect. He used to write a lot of the Superman stories in those days, I think, hands-on, Jack Schiff was more the Batman editor than Mort was. Mort was more into Superman. The stories in those days didn't have the in-depth quality that they had later in the '80s and '90s. They were lighter. Jack had outer space things. He got away from the Batman persona somehow. He got off track.

"The best era was when Bill Finger wrote the stories with me. They wrote themselves and Jack would OK almost anything Bill brought in. But when Bill stopped writing it and Jack took over and started in with outer space stuff, it became too cartoony. They got away from the dramatics of what Batman was all about. But Bill had it down pat. He was a pulp writer. He loved Doc Savage, Dr. Jekyll & Mr. Hyde and the Man Who Laughs. The Joker came from Victor Hugo's book, *The Man Who Laughs*."

Recalling the writer who helped Kane launch the Dark Knight in 1939, Kane grows wistful. "The foundation of the empire was Bill's stories and my drawing," he elaborates. "We worked on them together. I created some of the villains with him, and he created some on his own. I would talk the stories over with Bill beforehand, so a lot of the stories were mine as well as Bill's, but he literally did the writing. I'll tell you what was so great about Bill. He would present photos of the Statue of Liberty, or trains if he had trains, and all I would have to do is copy the statue. He was the only writer who would give you clips. And that made it so convenient. Bill died in '74. He's the unsung hero. He came up with the origin of Bruce Wayne with me. I'm sorry, in retrospect, that I *didn't* give him a byline."

As for the many artists who worked for and with Kane, one is singled out for special praise. "Dick Sprang was the nearest to me," says Kane. "He was more comic that I was. I had a uniqueness. There's an old saying, 'To the victor goes the spoils.' And they deserve it because we created the whole essence of the strip. Without me, there would not be a strip. It's not an ego thing," he maintains. "I have my own style. Nobody could ever emulate my style. It was an original. Nobody can imitate an originator."

Kane is quick to defend his earliest issues against criticisms that they were crude. "They were *not* crude," he insists. "They may have been a little



In *Batman*, Billy Dee Williams played the pre-Two-Face Harvey Dent, only to be pre-empted by Tommy Lee Jones for *Batman Forever*. "They promised [Williams] the role, but I guess they wanted big name value."

Photo: Ralph Nelson

rough, those first few issues, looking for the style. If you look at my early books, they really came on strong a year later. Some of them overdrew the characters. They made him look like Sloan's Liniment ads with all the muscles. Underacting, underdrawing and simplicity are better than overdoing it, in acting or writing or drawing. I don't agree that anybody ever made Batman better. They might have improved the anatomy here and there. But it lost the uniqueness of the character. A point of fact is that if you go to a Sotheby's auction, one Bob Kane original will get you $10-to-$25,000, and a ghost artist will get you $100."

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Art: Bob Kane

Kane recalls the heyday of *Batman*. "The best era was when Bill Finger wrote the stories with me. I'm sorry, in retrospect, that I *didn't* give him a byline."

Asked to pinpoint his favorite era of Batman, Kane responds laughing, "Obviously, the years when I drew it. I would say the first couple of years on Batman. Getting there is more fun than arriving. I had more excitement in that creative era than I did arriving, years later. I would draw 12-14 hours a day, until I would get nosebleeds from bending over the board. I had a studio in New York, with Jerry Robinson, George Roussos and Bill Finger. What an adventure that was! Even today at this mellow age, I may have more money and fame, but I would rather be young again and starting and groping. The first movie serial in 1943, I thought it was Cecil B. DeMille! It was so crude, but just to see it on film was more exciting to me than the '89 film."

But make no mistake, in 1995, Bob Kane is *very* excited about *Batman Forever*. "I think the choices were excellent this time around," he concludes. "At least this is the way I conceived the Batman, with Two-Face and Robin and so forth. I'm very enthusiastic about this picture. I think the fans will like it better."

Bride of the Bat Man

Elizabeth Sanders is out to redeem the family name in *Batman Forever*. Not the name Sanders, but the name Kane. As the wife of Batman creator Bob Kane, she saw her husband lose a brief cameo as a cartoonist in *Batman* due to illness, had a nearly-invisible walk-on herself in *Batman Returns* (where she was billed as "Gothamite 3") but now enjoys a very visible part in the latest Dark Knight film incarnation as Gossip Gerty.

"Gossip Gerty is a combination of some of the old-time Hollywood gossip columnists, like Hedda Hopper, Louella Parsons, Rona Barrett and currently even Oprah Winfrey, all rolled into one," Sanders explains.

"She's bigger than life, very flamboyant and a *lot* of fun to play. In the context of the script, she has a talk show five days a week called *Good Morning Gotham*. Although you don't see her on her talk show, she's known in Gotham as a celebrity talk show hostess. She's seen in the film at major functions, out and about among all the Gothamites, doing her thing and interviewing, catching up on the news of the day."

For Sanders, who has acted off-Broadway and on TV, this isn't her first foray into film. Small parts in *All That Jazz* and *Exorcist II: The Heretic* preceded this, her largest big-screen role to date.

"Two of my scenes are opposite Bruce Wayne [Val Kilmer]," she reveals. "One is opposite Bruce and Jim Carrey [as the Riddler]. And that's the coming-out party of Ed Nygma. I don't want to give away too much of the plot, but Ed Nygma comes up with this invention, so there's a big celebration. This is prior to Nygma becoming the Riddler. Nicole Kidman's also in the scene, as is Drew Barrymore as Ed Nygma's escort for the evening. The scene prior to that is the circus scene, where we see the Flying Graysons, and something terrible happens in that scene, which I *don't* want to give away."

Sidebar Photo Courtesy Bob Kane

Filling the role of Gossip Gerty in *Batman Forever* is Elizabeth Sanders, Mrs. Bob Kane. "She's bigger than life," Sanders offers.

Although she shares very little screen time with Wayne's alter-ego, Sanders is favorably impressed by the new Batman, Kilmer. "One of the scenes I was in, he does come down as Batman. I've really been impressed by the little bit I've seen. He seems to put on the uniform and he's Batman! What can I say? It's exciting. He even says he *feels* like Batman. Val's probably the epitome of what Bob created from the early days. I wasn't around in the early days because I'm Bob's second wife, so there's quite an age gap between us. That was *way* before I was born. But from everything Bob has told me of when he created Bruce Wayne/Batman, Val Kilmer really epitomizes Bob's feelings and what he wanted from the character.

"He's very contained as Bruce Wayne," she continues, "very much a gentleman, very elegant. And of course he has the square jaw that Bob loves. Val seems to fit so well in the part. I think he loves doing it. He was very concerned about Bob's feelings toward him and how he was playing the part. Hopefully, the fans will like him as much as we do."

Sanders credits director Joel Schumacher with breathing a new spirit into *Batman Forever*. "From my point-of-view, he's wonderful with actors. He's an actor's director. There's more of a relaxed feeling on the set. This is more fun. It's not as dark and brooding. Tommy Lee Jones as Two-Face is scary, but *not* repulsive. There's a bit of a swagger and 'Let's have fun with this.' It's more entertaining."

Now that she has established a new Batman supporting player, will Gossip Gerty return? Sanders laughs musically. "Well, one never knows. I would *love* to see Gossip Gerty as a continuing character. Joel said to me jokingly on the set one day, 'In the next Batman movie, we're going to have Gossip Gerty run off with somebody!' It's the kind of role that *could* continue. Anything could happen in this business."

—Will Murray

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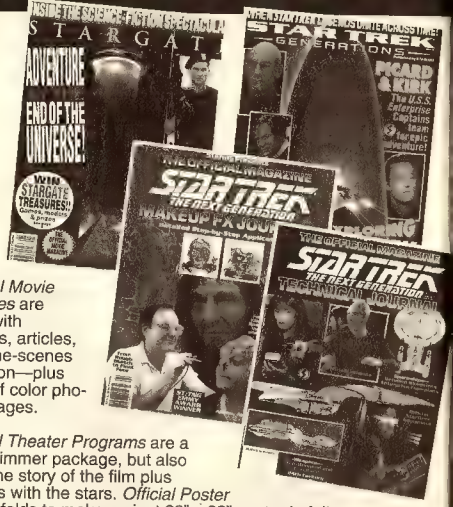

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BAT ATTITUDE

Coming to terms with his alter-ego, Adam West reviews his crusading past.

By JOE NAZZARO

In the prologue to his new book, *Back to the Batcave* (written with former STARLOG contributor Jeff Rovin), Adam West vividly recalls the day he was offered the lead role in 20th Century Fox TV's new Batman series. "I didn't want to think about George Reeves," he writes, "or Clayton Moore or Johnny Weissmuller or anyone else. I just wanted to do it."

Nearly 30 years later, looking back at that pivotal moment, West has no regrets about taking on the role that would change his life. "Let me try to answer that more specifically," he says. "I was so taken by that pilot script and I felt I had such an opportunity to create a character that would become a part of the pop culture that I was aware of the danger, but I thought, 'Why not?'

"That attitude always prodded me in a certain direction, and I mean severely. If I like something; if I find it amusing, titillating, or interesting on different levels, then I usually say the hell with it, and just go with it, and I certainly felt that way about Batman. I really didn't think, 'Oh, this is going to destroy my career, or prevent me from doing movies.' I've always felt if you go into something, no matter what the job is, and you bring something in, and you're really focused and trying to do the best you can, with a lot of honor and dignity and grace, then it will probably be OK."

His dignity and grace held West in good stead when he first put on the now-famous grey tights, satin cape and cowl and walked onto the Batman soundstage. One might think the prospect of stepping in front of a seasoned TV crew dressed as a colorful, comic-book superhero would be some cause for concern; West took it in stride—literally.

"This moment is the first time I've had any emotional recall or thought about that, with any kind of sincerity. I felt that the costume was so 'just right' for the character at that time, and I had gotten into the character so well, that I stepped out of the dressing room and didn't care. I just started acting as I thought Batman might, and they really didn't make fun of it."

From the moment he put on that costume for the first time, West knew he was now acting as point man for the

All Batman Photos: Copyright 1966, 1997 Greenway Productions & 20th Century Fox Television.

"There was nothing mundane or ordinary about *Batman*," says Adam West, the actor under the Caped Crusader's cowl in the hip, day-glo '60s series.

entire cast and crew as they began working together on this offbeat new series. "I sensed that immediately, and I stepped out of the dressing room, and strode across that stage with my head held high. I started walking like Batman and [West's voice changes timbre ever so slightly] speaking like Batman, so it really worked right away. I wasn't coming out as Adam West, who might have been embarrassed wearing a costume. I was emerging as Batman, and I wasn't self-conscious at all."

The actor also has vivid memories of entering the Batcave set for the first time, an experience he describes in the book as walking into a three-dimensional comic book panel. "That was fairly awesome, because the set with the lights on was very powerful, and in costume and in character, I immediately felt that I belonged. This was my house, so I really had a feeling that this was a good fit. It was a custom-made cave for me, and I belonged there. This was my 'joint.' "

During the first few weeks of production, the *Batman* team had to find that elusive balance between sly, self-deprecating humor and outright slapstick. Director Robert Butler (STARLOG PLATINUM #2), who helmed several of the early episodes, remembers having to rein in his leading man, who wanted to play the Caped Crusader in a more light-hearted manner. West concedes that there was a good deal of give-and-take between actor and director. "That's the best way to work. In other words, I always try to bring in more than anyone would want or expect, and we go on from there. That's part of what they're paying me for. I bring in a mass of stuff, and we go from there, and I'm certainly willing to cut back. There are lots of choices that you can make."

As an example, West points to the memorable scene in the first two-part adventure "Smack in the Middle," where Jill St. John's character falls into the Batcave's atomic pile. Batman's comment: "What a way to go-go!" The extra "go" was an ad-lib by West, and Butler let it pass, much to the crew's confusion. "They just didn't get it at first," chuckles West.

"Bob was wonderful. I liked working with him a lot, and I still think he was one of our best directors. He certainly has a place in television history, having directed that first segment, and others as well [including the pilots to *Star Trek*, *Hill Street Blues*, *Moonlighting* and *Lois & Clark*]. Those first segments were really my favorites."

West reveals that an early cross-section of viewers scored *Batman* lower than any other series in pilot history.

While someone in the test booth said the only reason it didn't test lower was because the dials didn't go any lower, West doesn't recall worrying about the negative reaction. "What, me worry?" he quips. "I was so concerned with my work and just staying alive, with all of the pressures because of the extreme interest in the show, all of the press attention and the demands from ABC and Fox. I was so busy just trying to get it right on the screen that I ignored all that.

"When I heard about that test reaction, I found it amusing. It was a challenge. There was nothing mundane or ordinary about *Batman*, and if the audience is so stunned that they can't press a button, is that a bad thing? No, maybe it's a very good thing."

In the end, popular opinion prevailed and *Batman* quickly became a smash hit. As the first episodes aired in 1966, West could see the groundswell of approval forming. "It began to build very quickly, as far as my sense of it, because they were spending a lot of money. They were promoting the hell out of it.

"And then there were those creative moments on the set, in which you're really not aware of what the finished product will be, because it involves the

"Burt wasn't quite camera-ready," West notes of Burt Ward, the young actor who portrayed Dick Grayson/Robin, the other half of the Dynamic Duo.

talents and work of many people. I began to see things come together and play as I envisioned they would, and it became such fun for the people around us who were listening or watching. They would come out of the dailies falling down, and already saying things from the show. People at the studio were walking around saying little catchphrases and quoting from the show, and saying, 'Did you see what they did?' I began to sense we were on to something."

On a personal level, West (who also discussed the series in STARLOG #117) witnessed the show's growing popularity firsthand. "The night the show first aired, when I went home, I stopped in a market to pick up some groceries. As I got close to the checkout, I could hear people at the cash register yelling, 'Hurry, hurry; *Batman* is on tonight! You've got to get us home!'

"Then, on the weekend after the first shows aired, I took my children and we went skiing in Big Bear, a little place outside LA. What happened was, we got out of the car, and I was wearing heavy ski clothes and a funny hat, with goggles on my forehead and dark glasses. I got out of the car with the kids, in this little tiny hamlet, and as we were walking across the street, people started to yell, 'There he is!' and follow me.

"I thought, 'There's what?' I could not conceive of people recognizing me dressed like that, after the first episode or two, especially when I had spent 80 percent of the show in a costume and mask! People aren't stupid, and if you play a character in a definitive way, and you give it enough depth or color or layers, it makes a very definite impression. It's like a big hot-air balloon suddenly coming over the horizon, with all kinds of colors and writing on it, and you recognize it right away. Actually, I think a hot air balloon is a pretty good metaphor for an actor!"

West is quick to share credit for the show's success with his co-stars, each of whom had a vital role to play. He starts with a untrained young actor named Burt Ward, who grew into Robin's emerald elf shoes within a short period of time.

"Burt wasn't entirely camera-ready," says West. "He had a certain vitality, and we—and I sensed this early—had a certain chemistry that was really appropriate for the characters. As far as craft or any kind of experience in using the camera, it really wasn't there in the beginning, but remember, he was Batman's sidekick, so he could just hang in and watch and be by Batman's side. We would whisper between takes, and I would say this or that, and Burt was very responsive. He was a very quick study. The wonderful thing about Burt was he had the right kind of goofy sense of humor, so that when we worked out his moments in private, he immediately got it. Certainly there was tension from time to time, but it's a funny thing: I feel that even today, if Burt and I got back in costume, and if we were in any kind of shape to do it, that character relationship would come back instantly.

"I've seen it happen from time to time, the moment we're thrown together. Even though we're very different people in many ways, in terms of our respective backgrounds and what we're into, the moment we're together on a stage and we assume those identities, it works. It also gets very zany sometimes. The thing is, it's fun to play Batman, it really is, and I'm sure it was fun for Burt to play Robin."

Recalling Yvonne Craig's Batgirl, another side of West's personality comes to the fore. With a look of boyish mischief, he elaborates on a story from *Back to the Batcave* in which the actor "accidentally" placed his gloved hand on a part of his co-star's anatomy.

"People didn't understand that, in character, I could do things that most people's characters couldn't, certainly not in a family show," the actor says, tongue firmly in cheek. "Batman would never do anything unseemly, so we were sneaking along a wall, and Batgirl is following me, with Robin following her, and I say as Batman, 'Shhh...wait,'

Eat your heart out, Val Kilmer. There's no leather or rubber or padding here; this Batman is 100 percent pure West.

"It's fun to play Batman, and I'm sure it was fun for Burt to play Robin," admits West, who got to play with all sorts of cool Bat toys—and was paid for it.

Design & Layout: Freddy Collado

All Batman Characters: Trademark & Copyright 1994 DC Comics

and I put my hand behind me to stop her, and put it on her breast.

"Of course, within character, I do not know this, but I really do as a person. People don't understand—the crew or anyone—they think it's an accident, it's made to look like an accident, but it *isn't* an accident. You see, if it comes out of character, you can get away with it."

Back to the Batcave also features reminiscences on the show's supporting cast of seasoned professionals. In the case of the late Alan Napier, West remembers his former butler Alfred with fondness and respect.

"Alan was always a professional. He was right in your face, he was there, but he was never arrogant or small-minded. He just got in character; he was always there, and he contributed. Out of the lights, he was really fun, and he had a great background; he did all those old MGM pictures. I was very fond of Alan. He was a nice gentleman."

Neil Hamilton is described as taking

Even before Jack Nicholson and Tommy Lee Jones battled Batman, the TV show drew a long line of distinguished guest villains, like actor/director Otto Preminger's Mr. Freeze.

the role of Commissioner James Gordon very seriously, a fact that West says may not have been a bad thing considering the series' light-hearted nature.

"I didn't know Neil very well, and remember that he had been around a long time. He had been a big leading man at Paramount, and I have a feeling that Neil came in briskly, almost briefcase in hand, ready to go to work, as quickly as possible, exactly the way it was written and don't make changes. If I indicated that Neil was somewhat humorless, I think it very well could have been because he came in, in character, and stayed that way until he left. Neil was well cast."

Even a portly villain like King Tut (Victor Buono) had it made in *Batman*. Each episode was stocked with lovely ladies and henchmen to do the dirty work.

West makes no apologies for his less-than-serious interpretation of the Caped Crusader, insisting that the current "Dark Knight" version just wouldn't have worked in the days of pop art and flower power that were the late '60s.

"When I think now of the things I was doing on screen, I, of course, was not aware that there would be one day be a much darker Batman in the comics and graphic novels. I had no thought or compulsion to feed that into what I was doing. I just decided to go full-bore with my vision at the time, but now I wonder if I had become aware of that; the changes that different generations of Batman would be created by DC as they were trying to sell their comics, if I would have changed the character somewhat. I really don't think so, because I had a very strong feeling about what would work as far as longevity. I had this feeling that you can't do niche TV like niche magazines, and maybe people love that kind of stuff, and I do read it, and if you'll excuse the expression, marvel at it.

"No, I'm very impressed with the artwork and all of the imaginative, wondrous stuff that you see today, but I know it's niche stuff. It sells to a certain reader, who somehow thrives on that kind of violence and fantasy, but my sense of it is that it's not family-friendly. It may be fine for many of the walking wounded, and maybe I'm one of them, but when you're doing something that you want to see reach the biggest audience and be the most satisfying, maybe you can't do that sort of thing. The fact that our show became a classic attests to that. I don't think it would have if we had been Batman, Robin and *Dark Shadows*."

If there's one subject that strikes a decidedly sour note with West, it would be the fact that DC Comics blocked the TV Batman and Robin from making personal appearances in costume. The money earned by those gigs would seem small compensation indeed, considering the staggering boost in sales DC experienced in the '60s thanks to the popular, small-screen incarnation.

"I was a little disconcerted and irritated by that for a while—the fact that we've never really been acknowledged or paid any regard by DC, as far as the new magazines, the movies, the new enterprises. They sold more comics than they ever dreamed of when we started.

"You see, I always thought that one Batman helps the other. It's all Batman, just different versions, visions and generations of it. We can all do our Batman, whatever it is, and I don't think it confuses the audience. I was told we couldn't use clips from our show in a commercial way; we got the word from DC. The reason I was given was, 'It will confuse the audience.' How can the audience be confused between my Batman and the one in the leather and rubber suit?"

On the inevitable topic of the Batman films, West has somewhat backed away from the idea of playing the Caped Crusader on the big screen, but he feels a supporting role certainly wouldn't hurt future box-office returns. He also hints that lightening up the Dark Knight might make him more accessible to the general public. "My prediction is, it will come to a point when, for example, if Warners continues to do the movies, they will realize that they can polish up the franchise, they can enhance it, they can make it a healthier if they become more family-

"If it comes out of character, you can get away with it," maintains West, who took advantage of his good guy persona to grope co-star Yvonne Craig.

"I have never been one to speculate in a profound way about what might have been, or what could have been if I had opened another door. Maybe I'm a little reckless that way, but I've learned to really trust my instincts, and they've either got me in a lot of trouble, or they've been fairly kind to me. Who knows what would have happened if I had gone on to features, other series, whatever?

"On the other hand, I realize how lucky I am," says Adam West. "There are hundreds of television stars and others who aren't working and are unheard of since they did, but I've gone on working constantly. It seems that I go from one chancy thing to another, but I think that's part of living life." CS

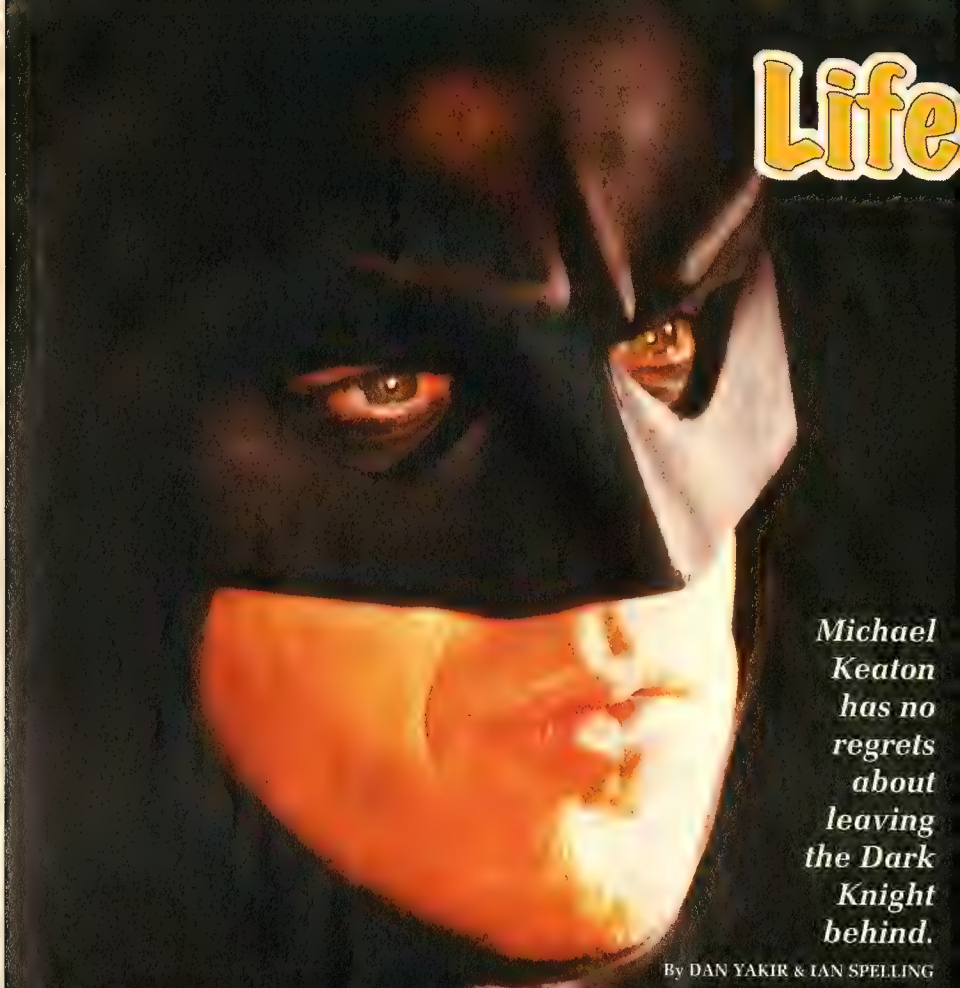
friendly. Whether I come in like Sean Connery did with Harrison Ford in *Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade*, and play 'Uncle Batman' to whoever is playing it, they'll still have to make it more light-hearted, with more wit; not so nihilistic and dark and sinister and violent."

And that brings West back to where this discussion started: Does the former TV idol have any regrets about taking on the role that would change his life forever? Three decades of hindsight, a few million fans worldwide and a best-selling book later, the answer is still a resounding no.

Batman survived the lowest test screening scores in history to face off against the likes of Clock King (Walter Slezak) and his overzealous, coppertoned gardener.

Among West's recent credits are the *Naked Gun*-like *Hawaiian Punch* segments of Fox's short-lived *Danger Theater*.

Life



Michael Keaton has no regrets about leaving the Dark Knight behind.

By DAN YAKIR & IAN SPELLING

Michael Keaton stood to make tens of millions of dollars in salary, profit participation and licensing revenues by heading back before the cameras for *Batman Forever*, which would have marked his third outing as the Dark Knight. Instead, after much contemplation, the actor elected to pass on the opportunity.

Why?

Part of it has to do with the fact that Keaton is in the enviable position of being able to financially afford to skip the latest *Batman* outing, as Val Kilmer assumes Keaton's cape and Joel Schumacher takes over the directorial duties from Tim Burton. "I'm very fortunate," says Keaton. "I didn't have to do it."

According to Keaton, he cut short his Dark Knight days because his character "was too closed-off. Talk about a closed-off guy," he blurts out. "Like I had done it twice and I read the script for the third one and I didn't think it was all that satisfying this time around. So, I stopped.

"I had gotten to the point where I could see a whole lot of other things that I wanted to do. It became a question of what do I really want to do with my life? What do I really want to do with my career? And when do I do these things? How important is it for me to do another *Batman* film right now? If I hadn't been satisfied with them, especially the first one, I might have said, 'Let me see if I can get this in here.' But I had done it twice and I thought the first time that I did it pretty well. And I wondered if I could be happier getting all these things in with a new *Batman* or without it. When I added it all up, my heart said, 'Not this time. It's time to move on.' There [illegible] things to do."

[illegible]d. Keaton felt it was simply

Without Batman

repeating himself in what was a "fairly dark character" that didn't allow too many acting challenges to filter in. "I liked what I did the first time," he emphasizes, "and I didn't make this decision easily. I mean, I thought about it a lot, because it's not just a movie; it's an enormous enterprise. I guess it's a risk, but that's exactly what keeps me excited. And I'm fortunate that it was not such a *huge* risk and that I'm OK and taken care of."

According to Keaton, "the biggest pleasure about doing *Batman* was to act in something that was that large, that huge and that powerful. It was the whole feel, the whole spectacle, the whole event and to portray somebody who was so much larger than life. It was just great fun personally, and hard figuring out *how* to pull it off. *Batman Returns* I still liked, but it didn't satisfy me as much."

Although he denies having explained his decision to quit the *Batman* cycle due to its excessive violence and darkness, Keaton admits that "I wanted to step out of being like this [shows a glum face]. I could have made Batman lighten up a bit, but I had done that kind of character already. The movie was knocked for violence, and I agree that there were violent moments in it, but that was cartoon violence. I would not argue against violence in those movies, and not because I was in them. But it did get a little spooky for kids sometimes, especially in *Batman Returns*."

For Keaton, the more removed his character is from his real self, the greater the pleasure in bringing him to life. His roles in *Speechless*, as a political speechwriter; in *My Life*, about a man recording his life for his unborn son before dying of cancer; in *The Paper*, as an on-the-run journalist; and even in his debut, *Night Shift*, as a morgue-worker-turned-pimp, are all "character" parts, but they are nonetheless closer to the actor's real-life persona, revealing mostly his zany sense of humor. "They are more personal performances," he admits. "Those guys aren't all that different from me.

"But I prefer real distinct, different characters. It's probably what I do best. I'm just lucky enough to have this other thing going," he says cryptically, referring to his stardom, "otherwise I would have just been a character actor. I was fortunate in that I had done a bunch of other movies before *Batman*. I had a foundation of other movies and a pretty wide variety of other roles that I had played. That's what made *Batman* work for me."

Batman was removed enough from the actor to qualify as a challenge, but Keaton doesn't fancy repetition. And as Keaton himself has evolved as a person and an actor, opening up—"staying open to let things in and out," as he puts it—and allowing the expression of greater vulnerability to become part of his existence, an essentially masked character like Batman seems like a relic of his past.

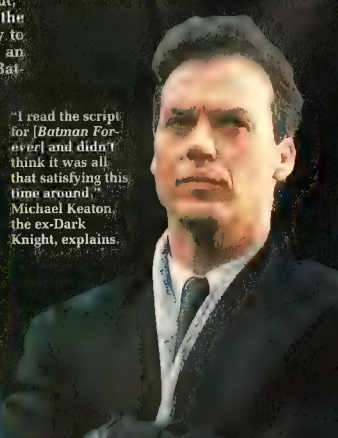
Looking back on *Batman* and *Batman Returns* (which he discussed in CS #9 & #29), Keaton seems especially fond of the original film, in which he battled Jack Nicholson as the Joker. "I like them both. I really like the first one," he says. "Even though it had faults, there was nothing like that movie. Nobody expected it. It was artful and powerful, really powerful. The second one I liked, too, but I did not like it as much as *Batman*. It was too something. I don't know quite what. It just wasn't as satisfying."

Keaton will next be seen on the screen in *Multiplicity*, a film directed by Harold (*Groundhog Day*) Ramis and written by Lowell Ganz and Babaloo Mandel, who penned such hits as *Parenthood*, *City Slickers* and the Keaton vehicles *Night Shift* and *Gung Ho*. "I liked the combination of people and it's a real good idea. It's about a guy who doesn't have the time to do anything, not just to do the things he wants to do, but the things he *should* be doing," explains the actor. "I've gone through this many times, trying to be everything to everybody and trying to be something to myself. It's hard. It's about a guy who can't be everywhere he wants to be, so he gets himself cloned." CS

Design & Layout: Yvonne Jay.

All Photos: Ralph Nelson.

All in all, being the Caped Crusader had its perks, like romancing Kim Basinger as Batman and Michelle Pfeiffer here in *Batman Returns*.



"I read the script for [*Batman Forever*] and didn't think it was all that satisfying this time around," Michael Keaton, the ex-Dark Knight, explains.

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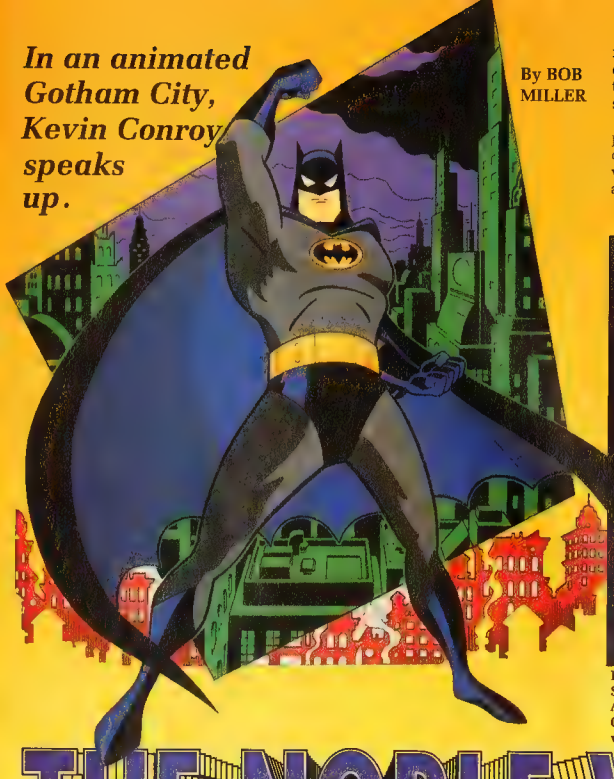
In an animated Gotham City, Kevin Conroy speaks up.

By BOB MILLER



THE NOBLE VOICE

When the Dark Knight speaks, it's with a cold, impassioned voice hardened by an iron resolve, fueled by vengeance—and trained in the dramatics of Shakespeare. For the animated Batman, *these are the qualities provided by actor Kevin Conroy, who has elevated the role beyond that of a typical cartoon superhero.*

A native of Connecticut, Conroy began his acting career in 1973 at age 17, performing off-Broadway and attending Juilliard's Drama Center. There he roomed with Robin Williams, and developed his thespian skills under John Houseman's direction. After graduation in 1979, he toured with Houseman's The Acting Company, followed by a national tour of Deathtrap. *He later starred in productions of* King Lear, Hamlet, A Midsummer Night's Dream, Eastern Standard *and* Lolita.

Since 1985, Conroy has worked predominantly in television, appearing as a regular on Dynasty *(1987),* O'Hara *(1988),* Tour of Duty *(1990) and* Rachel Gunn, R.N. *His mini-series appearances include* George Washington, *and playing Ted Kennedy in* Kennedy. Batman: The Animated Series *is his first animated starring role.*

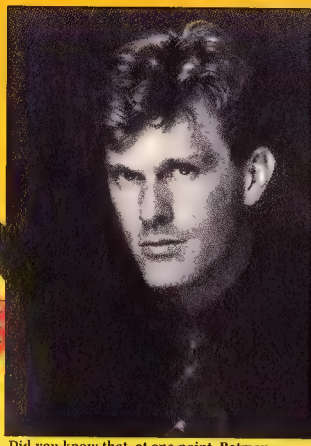
COMICS SCENE: How is the animated *Batman* more than just "illustrated radio"? Why is it so popular?

KEVIN CONROY: Because it's *not* done as a "cartoon." It's done as a dramatic series that happens to be animated.

Viewers, especially the young audience, are so tired of being condescended to in animation. The world has changed: Younger and younger kids are exposed to more and more. To entertain the young audience, you must fulfill those expectations. If you come up with a cartoon like they used to do 20 years ago, you're not going to satisfy a young audience.

That's why there's a cross-over appeal to adults, too, because the show doesn't condescend to anyone. They're writing good dramas, with good actors and good writing and music.

People react well to that. It proves that if you give people quality, they'll tune in more. From what I've heard from other studios in town, it has raised the industry standard for TV animation. This is only going to benefit the audience, because the audience will get better and better shows.



Did you know that, at one point, Batman, Superman and Popeye roomed together? At Juilliard, in fact. Yes, Kevin Conroy, Christopher Reeve and Robin Williams were classmates.

CS: How did you get the role?

CONROY: I had never done an animated voice. I had done some voiceover work, but I'm primarily a theater and TV actor.

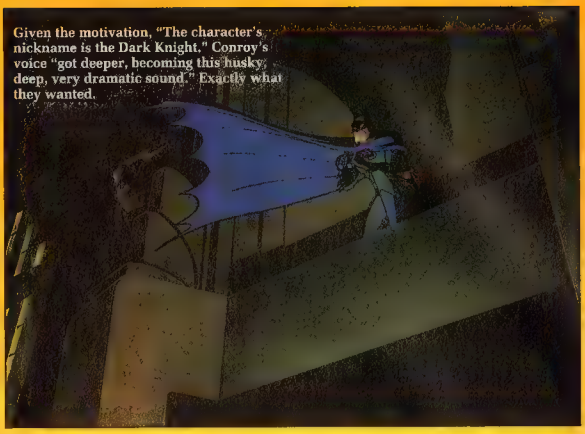
My agent said, "They're casting an animated series; why don't you do some voices?" So I went in and did a cold audition. The producers said, "The character's nickname is the Dark Knight. Use your imagination. What sound do you think a Dark Knight would make?" And so my voice got deeper, becoming this husky, deep, very dramatic sound. They said, "That's *exactly* what we want."

CS: Did you have any prior exposure to *Batman* that prepared you for the role?
CONROY: I never read comics as a kid. I went through very strict Catholic schools, and that kind of stuff was really frowned upon.

I had seen the Adam West TV series in the '60s, as a kid. But that seemed so different than what they were going for [in the animated series]. So, that was no source of information for me.
CS: So with limited knowledge of the character, how did you approach it?
CONROY: As an actor. As a performance. I approach each script like it's *Hamlet*. That's the *only* way to do it. You approach each one as if this is the best writing; this is the most interesting character; how you make him as three-dimensional, sympathetic and real and passionate as possible. The kind of actors they've attracted have approached the characters with that kind of seriousness.

The challenge is to only use your voice to express all that, and not rely on physicality. For an actor who has never done an animated voice, it's a challenge, because I've never been able to rely solely on my voice. I've always had other things to work for me.

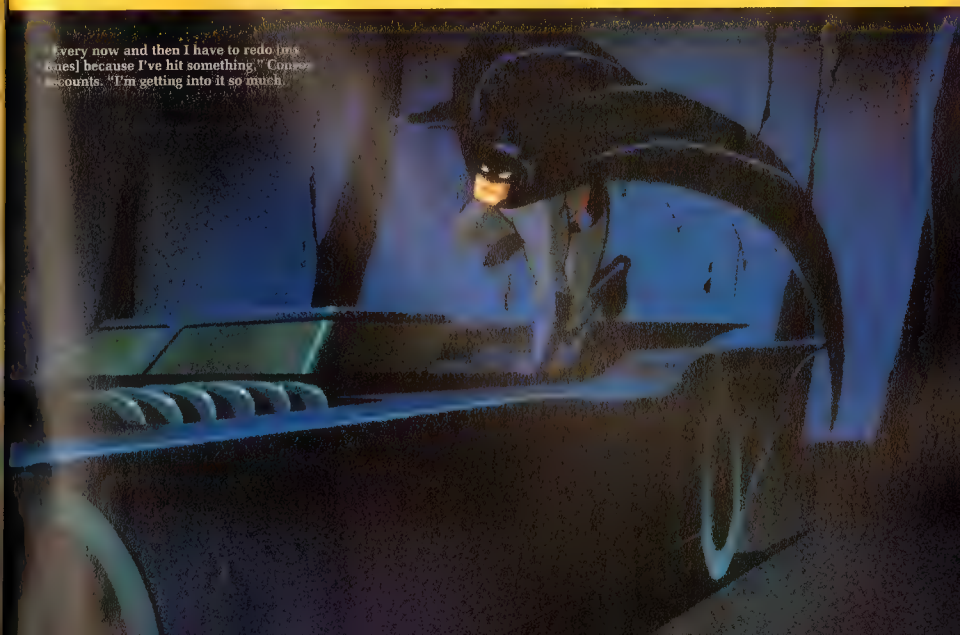
When I'm doing Batman, every now and then I have to redo [my lines] because I've hit something—I hit the microphone or the side of the booth, and make these big banging sounds because I'm getting into it so much



Given the motivation, "The character's nickname is the Dark Knight," Conroy's voice "got deeper, becoming this husky, deep, very dramatic sound." Exactly what they wanted.

I was approaching it as an acting exercise. Then, I started reading the comics, so I did some of the homework backwards. Mark Hamill was the one who said, "Well, you really should look at some of these books because it might help you."

Then again, it might not. The fun thing about having *no* background is that you come into it totally *fresh*, and approach it completely as an acting challenge, with no preconceived notions of what this guy should sound like, or how he should be. There's a certain sense of humor about him, which the producers love. They didn't know I was going to be that irreverent, which gives it a little more life. My classical theatrical background training makes me prepared to challenge some of the long, internal soliloquies they have for this character.



Every now and then I have to redo [my lines] because I've hit something," Conroy recounts. "I'm getting into it so much.

Photos: Michael Leahnov

The faces (voices, really) of evil: That's Aron (Killer Croc) Kincaid up top, (following clockwise); Mark (The Joker) Hamill, Arleen (Harley Quinn) Sorkin, Diane (Poison Ivy) Pershing, Paul (The Penguin) Williams and Richard (Two-Face) Moll.

The one I've found most challenging to do was "Perchance to Dream," where I played so many roles. There were long scenes that were soliloquies. I loved that, not only because it was a challenge for me, but because we really got into Batman's mind, and what makes him tick. I thought that was really powerful. Also the fact that some of it was in black and white, which I think is very courageous of the studio to do. And, the use of some Shakespeare. I found the whole thing elevating to the audience, rather than condescending.

I did the voice of Batman, Batman in an altered state (he was drugged), young Bruce Wayne, Bruce Wayne and then the father, Wayne Senior. So there were five voices that I was doing. It was so much fun doing scenes with myself. I was doing [*assumes voice*] Batman to Altered Batman. The nuances to keep it all subtly believable that it's the same person, but different enough so that the audience keeps track of the fact that it's different dimensions of the same person. It was a *challenge*, and fun, to be able to draw on those old theatrical skills to pull it off, and then have other actors come up afterwards and say, "That was *great*. That was passionate, what you were doing." And it was fun, because you think, "This is an animated series we're getting all excited about."

"When confronted with it," observes, "we would love to become something bigger than ourselves. Batman is that fantasy realized."

But the proof's in the pudding. The result has been the public reception; they really appreciate it.

CS: But when you're going from Bruce Wayne to Batman, what more is there than making your voice lower?

CONROY: There's much more to it, because—it's a hard thing to really explain. He has to be believably the same person with the same outlook, the same morals, the same everything. And

"None of us knew what the quality was going to be," remembers Conroy. "We were all blown away" by the animated series.

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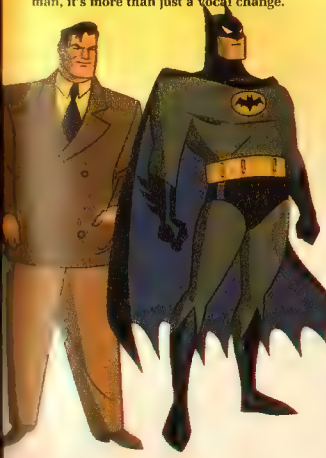


When changing from Bruce Wayne to Batman, it's more than just a vocal change.

yet, when he becomes Batman, it's more than his voice that changes. It's another aspect of his personality that takes over, and he becomes more impassioned, more noble.

That's what's great about Batman. It's the nobler aspects of Bruce Wayne, but it's also the nobler aspects of all of us. When confronted with tragedy, we would love to become something bigger than ourselves, and solve the tragedy. People fantasize about being a hero and helping someone in trouble. Batman is that fantasy realized not just for Bruce Wayne, but for the audience. So when he gets into that voice, there's a *lot* more weight that goes into that voice than just changing it.

There's other thinking that must go into the character. Inwardly, Bruce Wayne is still an adolescent watching his parents being murdered. That will never leave him. And people really relate to that.

Everyone has those [times], whenever their heart has been broken, that they can relate to. That's human. Even though Bruce seems like he doesn't have a care in the world, very flip and has a sense of humor, sophistication and wealth, he's really a lonely, hurt person—overwhelmed by a great sadness that he has never been able to get over. Everyone appreciates that, because everyone has had those moments in their lives.

CS: When you started the series, did you have an idea that this was going to be a quality show?

CONROY: No, I had no idea. *None* of us had any idea. We got involved in it a year and-a-half before it started airing. We started recording episodes during January or February '91. The reason it took so long was because the stories were taking much longer to write than the studio had thought. In setting the tone, there were two schools of thought: One wanted a comic-book show, and the other, a dramatic series. So, they tried to arrive at a middle ground, but I think the dramatic people far outweighed the comic people.

We started doing this in spring '91,

and they got together an amazing cast. Two hundred voices, and they're all actors like Harry Hamlin, Mark Hamill, Efrem Zimbalist Jr., Ed Asner, Adrienne Barbeau, Jean Smart, Stacy Keach and Dana Delany and Treat Williams—an unbelievable group of actors. It's amazing. I mean, *where* are they getting all these people? They're all busy, but they would make time for [the animated series] because everyone wanted to be part of it.

But no one knew what the quality was going to be until the first episodes came back from the [overseas] animators for looping. We went in to loop the extra lines, and people came out of those sessions with their eyes hanging out of their heads: [*incredulously*] "Have you *seen* the footage?" We were all blown away—we were just acting it as well as we could.

CS: Do you record with the cast as an ensemble, or does each actor record their part separately?

CONROY: All of us are in a room together, doing the whole script in sequence. Periodically, they [record separately] because someone's not available that day. When you're dealing with an average of eight or 10 actors per episode times 65 episodes, there are times that someone's not available. That's the only time we do things out of sequence.

Even in episodes where I'm Batman/Bruce Wayne, or Batman/Crazy Batman arguing with myself, doing different voices, they do it sequentially. They don't do all one voice and then the other. If they can get away with it, they do it as it's written, sequentially. It makes it more difficult and more challenging.

CS: What about the other actors that you've worked with? Like Adam West.

CONROY: He did the Grey Ghost, an older actor, and [it was] a very moving performance. He's a very gracious gentleman, as an actor, and as a person. I felt a little awkward because it was sort of his territory from the TV series. Here I was doing the voice, but he was so gracious about it. We had a wonderful session together, and he put me at ease. He loved playing that character. It was a beautiful performance, the producers were very happy with him, and he was, too.

CS: How about Loren Lester?

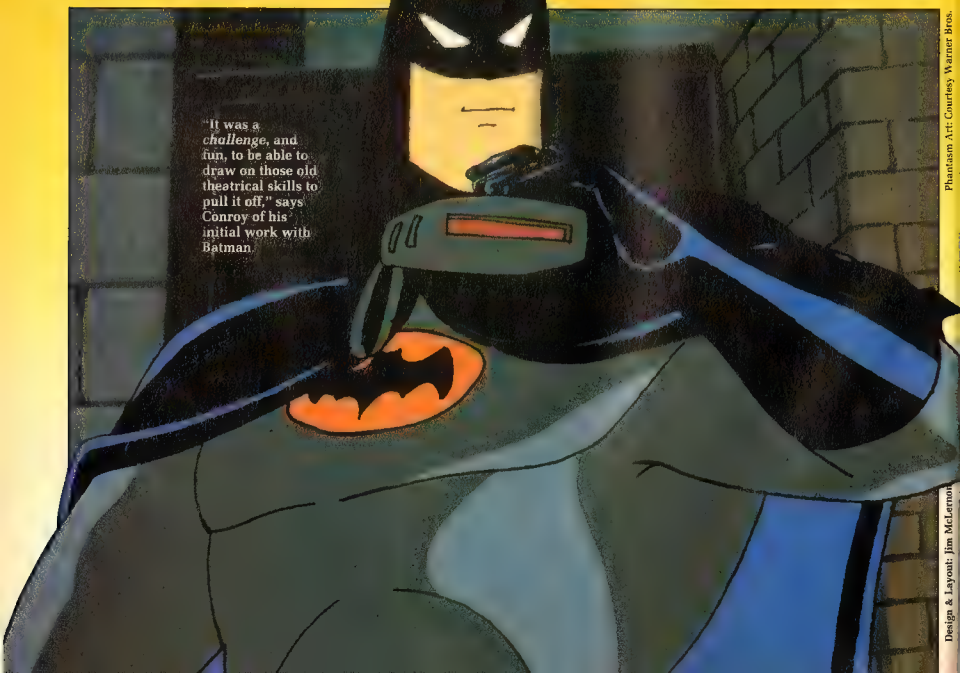
CONROY: That's Robin. Oh, he's great. I'm not sure how many episodes Robin has actually been in—about a dozen. I think he would like to have Robin in more episodes. He's a very good guy: he's a *very* good actor, and does the role very well.

But they wanted to concentrate, as the movies have, on the Dark Knight aspect of Batman. It makes it more dramatic when he's alone, in many of these situations. The lone hero kind of thing. Robin is a great character to have, periodically, but I don't think you would want to make him a constant, because it diffuses some of the drama for Batman.

CS: What about Efrem Zimbalist Jr.?

CONROY: [*Chuckles*] I'm tempted to say that Efrem is like acting with my father, but it's better than that. He's what you would want one's own father to be, the perfect father. He's very, very generous, very kind. He has had such a long career and done so much film work that one forgets the amount of stuff that he has done, how long he has been acting. So, he has a wealth of stories, and everyone loves him on the show. He's a true gentleman, a real pro. Also, I knew Stephanie Zimbalist at Juilliard. So, there was sort of a bridge there. I had never met him, but it was a contact through his daughter.

The relationship is funny, because the relationship between Bruce and Alfred, and Batman and Alfred is not unlike the relationship between me and Efrem. It makes it very easy. And we ad-lib periodically. We throw in an extra line [*chuckles*], and the producers vote as to whether it gets to stay.



"It was a *challenge*, and fun, to be able to draw on those old theatrical skills to pull it off," says Conroy of his initial work with Batman.

Phantasm Art: Courtesy Warner Bros.

Design & Layout: Jim McLernon

CS: And Bob Hastings?

CONROY: I call Bob Hastings "The Man That Time Forgot," because he has been acting forever, he's not a young man anymore, and yet he looks like he's 30. It's amazing; the man has not aged. I don't know how he has done it. He's very funny, very nice, a real pro with a very gentle disposition. That Commissioner Gordon gruffness is a put-on, he's not gruff at all.

CS: Ron Perlman?

CONROY: Ron came on for just a few episodes as a guest villain [Clayface], and he's a good example of people approaching the role from a very dramatic point-of-view, going into the character and giving a dramatic reading, rather than doing what one might consider a typical comic-book voice. He really delved into the mind of the character, and gave a very rich reading of what he thought the man was like. He's that kind of actor.

CS: Richard Moll?

CONROY: Richard Moll is a very funny man. *Very* funny. When he turns into Two-Face, and that monster comes out, you think, "Boy, where did *that* come from?" It's *surprising* because he's so funny, and a nice guy.

CS: Adrienne Barbeau?

CONROY: She has been very, very nice to work with. We have many mutual friends, actually, although I never knew her. The incredible thing about Adrienne is her voice. It's *so* seductive that it's perfect for that role. And it's very easy for her to do she's very facile with her voice. She's seductive in person, too. We had a good time working with her.

CS: Paul Williams?

CONROY: Well, he's terrific, he's very funny. He has a great sense of humor about the whole thing.

CS: Mark Hamill?

"As a performance, I approach each script like it's *Hamlet*. That's the *only* way to do it," the actor says.

CONROY: Mark Hamill is so impressive doing the Joker, because he becomes sort of *mad* as he's doing it, physically. People sometimes underestimate Mark's talent because of Luke Skywalker. They think of him as just a young man because he has done that movie [*Star Wars*] so well. He's *so* much more than that. He's very multifaceted, and quite brilliant. His mind goes so fast, and he's able to improvise with the stuff sometimes, wildly, and it's a real pleasure watching him.

CS: What can you tell fans about *Mask of the Phantasm?*

CONROY: Well, it's great because they're not constrained by Standards and Practices from the network; the writers can do anything they want to do—within the confines of good taste. Batman has a love affair, and it's with a woman that he had gotten involved with years and years before, and had never done anything about.

The [casting and recording] director of our show is a lady named Andrea Romano, who is really the spark that keeps it all going. She's such a dynamite person; she can inspire a rock to give a good performance.

Early in the episodes' recording, I was trying to keep everyone's spirits up by kidding around, so every now and then I'll say something that's a little ridiculous—in the Batman voice in the middle of the scene, and it'll crack everyone up. I'm a little irreverent, but the producers like it and it makes the show more fun.

One of the earlier things I did was during a fight scene: [*grunts*] "Unh! Unh! Uhhhh! Unh! [*followed by a sigh*] —Oooooohhh, Andrea." [*Chuckles*] Everyone was just destroyed, and we had to stop for five minutes. The booth, the producers, everyone just lost it because it *did* sound like the kind of sounds you would make doing something other than fighting Andrea loved it.

Every week, during an episode, I would find a different place to put Andrea's name in. After a fall, after a grunt, I would go, "Oooohhh, Andrea."

(continued on page 82)

Playing around during taping, Conroy would amuse fellow cast members and director Andrea Romano with sexual innuendo outtakes. *Mask of the Phantasm* pokes fun at that: Bruce Wayne's love interest is named Andrea.

THE GOLDEN GUN

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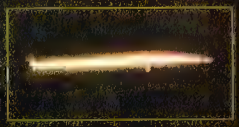

Even the replica bullet is engraved with 007— just like in the film.

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"One thing I learned in terms of preparation," advises Val Kilmer, the newcomer behind the hero's cowl, "is that putting on the Batsuit makes you want to kill."

Kilmer, of course, succeeds Michael Keaton in that Bat costume. Fortunately, Kilmer is accustomed to offbeat heroism. His past roles include the outrageous Madmartigan who fought beside *Willow*; the unpredictable Doc Holliday, who gunned down the cowboys of *Tombstone*; and the tragic Jim Morrison, who led *The Doors*. Among his other notable credits are *Top Gun*, *Top Secret!*, *Real Genius* and *True Romance*.

And now he is Batman, a hero created more than 50 years ago. "The way that [Batman creator] Bob Kane set up the dynamics of the characters," Kilmer explains, "there has to be something archetypal and primary in the audience's interest, because the character has evolved and changed, but still the core is the same."

Delighted to be playing the role and committed to two further adventures, Val Kilmer believes *Batman Forever* will be a grand epic. But he doesn't want to oversell it, simply saying, "It's exciting to look forward to being entertained."

Val Kilmer is the latest face behind Batman's cowl.

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HOLY SIDEKICK!

Years after he beat up the baddies alongside Batman, Burt Ward recalls his days as the Boy Wonder.

By STEVE SWIRES

Costumed crimefighters may be worshipped by a grateful public when they battle sinister villains plotting world domination. But once their valiant victories are won, there is little room in Hollywood for unemployed superheroes.

Vaulted to stardom by his role as the diminutive yet resourceful boy wonder, Robin, sidekick to Adam West's caped crusader *Batman* in the smash hit TV series of almost 30 years ago, Burt Ward became an instant media sensation. Personifying the youthful exuberance amid the camp craze of the 1960s, he was besieged by hordes of adolescent admirers, even as he was being exploited by industry powerbrokers.

Eventually, his unprecedented notoriety vanished as abruptly as it arrived. Indelibly identified as a long underwear juvenile lead, he was unable to compete with seasoned professionals, and disappeared into show business obscurity. Reevaluating his career options, Ward eventually reemerged as an entrepreneur, masterminding several successful business ventures.

"I didn't intellectualize my career moves," Ward admits. "I was a true innocent, and wasn't corrupted by the industry. I didn't care about taking advantage of my fame. I wasn't out for the money. I was just a kid having fun."

Born Bert John Gervis Jr., on July 6, 1945 in Beverly Hills, California, Ward made his show business debut at the tender age of two. Billed as the "World's Youngest Professional Ice Skater," and later documented in *Ripley's Believe It or Not*, he toured the United States in his father's ice show, *Rhapsody on Ice*.

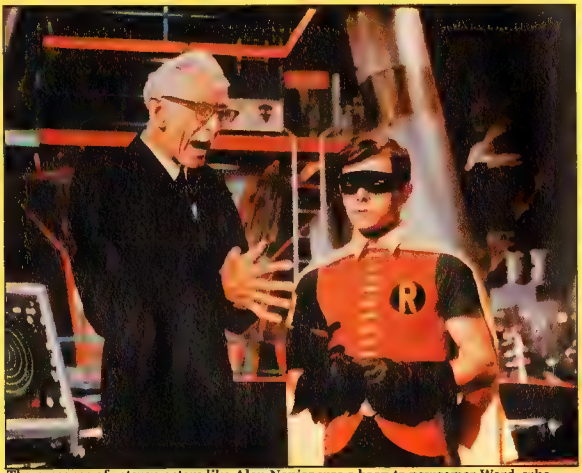
Originally intending to become a lawyer, Ward switched career goals due to a high-school romance. "I was dating the daughter of Mort Lindsey, the musical director of *The Merv Griffin Show*,"

Holy career moves! Neophyte actor Burt Ward became quite a Boy Wonder as the junior half of the Dynamic Duo on TV's *Batman*.

All Batman Characters: Trademark & Copyright 1995 DC Comics

"Adam West was a real pro," comments Ward. "He was fun to work with. Usually, we were like two kids playing."

"It was an experience I'll treasure forever," says Ward of his short but high profile TV career.



The presence of veteran actors like Alan Napier was a boon to newcomer Ward, who lucked into the series role without years of "dues-paying."

he recalls. "After graduation, Mort helped me get a summer apprenticeship at the Bucks County Playhouse, in New Hope, Pennsylvania. Also in my group was a young guy named Rob Reiner. I stayed up all night building and painting sets, and took the train to New York to audition for Off-Broadway plays. I came close a few times, but never got any parts."

Ward returned to the West Coast, where he studied theater at the University of California at Santa Barbara and acting at UCLA, selling real estate on the side to make ends meet. "I sold a house to producer Saul [*Logan's Run*] David," he relates. "I convinced him to watch me play a scene. I asked him to help me get work as an extra, but he sent me to an agent instead, so I could join the Screen Actors Guild. The agent told me the only reason he took me was that David asked him to, and that I shouldn't expect any jobs for a year."

Lacking any prior professional acting experience, Ward soon blithely went out on his first interview, for an unidentified role in a top-secret project. "My agent never told me it was *Batman*," he notes. "All he said was: 'Something is going on at 20th Century Fox. I'm sending you to see the casting director.' I met the casting director, and he sent me to the executive producer, William Dozier, who said, 'You're kind of *tall* to play this character.' I said, 'I promise not to grow any more.' "

Called back to screen test opposite Adam West, Ward was understandably confused when ordered to squeeze into a garish red, yellow and green costume. "I *still* didn't know I was testing for *Batman*," he laughs. "I wondered why I was wearing a costume. They finally told me Robin was a comic-book character. But I *never* read Batman comics, so it had no meaning for me."

Naive to a fault, Ward didn't even realize he had definitely been cast as the buoyant Boy Wonder until just before shooting started on the two-part pilot show in 1965. "The studio thought my agent told me I had the part, and my agent thought the studio told me," he says. "For six weeks, they kept calling to find out my glove and shoe size—and I was *sweating*, trying to figure out what was going on. I thought, 'Why don't they just *tell* me if I have the part.' Finally, my agent told me to come in and sign contracts. I figured they were agency contracts. It turned out I was signing *studio* contracts."

Dropping out of college in his junior year, the novice actor was too unassuming to worry about abandoning his formal education to accept the intimidating responsibility of co-starring in a network TV series. "I was thrilled to death to be able to *work*," Ward affirms. "Because it was my first acting job—and I got it so easily—I didn't feel the anxiety of actors who have been turned down dozens of times, and who try to get even with everyone who ever

rejected them when they finally do get a part. I didn't have any bitterness, or any ax to grind.

"I didn't take the role for granted. I was *honored* to have it. But I was too new to feel the anguish of having suffered for my craft. My main concern was that I didn't know the protocol for dealing with the producers and the crew, which made me feel awkward."

Fortunately, possessing a photographic memory, Ward soon adjusted to the requirements of balanced ensemble playing. "I *always* knew my lines," he asserts. "I kept everybody on their toes. Adam occasionally used a teleprompter or cue cards, but I rarely made mistakes. I got a reputation for doing my scenes on the first take. I was very pliable in the directors' hands. I remembered everything they said, and did everything I was told. Their basic direction to me was: 'Do it the way you want, but be *enthusiastic*.' "

Sharing most of his screen time with the older and far more experienced West, Ward quickly established a unique working rapport with his initially cautious co-star. "Adam is a real pro," he comments. "He was fun to work with, and we became good friends. I learned a great deal from him. Sometimes, I was a little grumpy with him, particularly when he taught me how easily he could upstage me by blocking me from the camera. But usually, we were like two kids playing."

Indeed, the irrepressible Ward especially enjoyed poking fun at the implications of the relationship between millionaire Bruce Wayne and his ward Dick Grayson. "It was like a game for me," he states. "I would just get in there and take each scene to the nth degree. Naturally, the censors were always on my back. Adam would have to calm me down by saying, 'No, Burt, you can't go *that* far.'

"For example, in one scene Bruce and Dick were about to retire for the evening. As we walked up the staircase with our backs to the camera, Adam said, 'Well, Dick, it's time to go to bed.' I said, 'You're right, Bruce'—and I put my *arm* around him. Geez, did that create an *uproar*!"

Maintaining a light-hearted attitude despite the debilitating grind of weekly TV production, the two playful actors took advantage of every opportunity to lighten their labors with levity. "The situation became really *crazy* when we did one of the Catwoman shows," Ward remembers. "It was late in the afternoon. We had been under the hot studio lights all day, and were sweating in our costumes. Adam was supposed to put two cats together to form a map. He put them together in the '69' position. I started laughing, then he broke up, and we blew the take.

"My back was to the camera, so Adam could see tears of laughter rolling down my face. He said I looked like a raccoon in my mask. I told him he was cross-eyed in his cowl. The director, Oscar Rudolph, rushed up to us in a panic. He said, 'You guys are going to laugh me out of the business!' "

Ward is a Black Belt in karate, and frankly, he would have to be to get any respect dressed in tights, elf shoes and a yellow satin cape.

All Batman Photos: Copyright 1966, 1967 Greenway Productions & 20th Century Fox Television.

Nevertheless, Ward found little amusement coping with the pressures of primetime network expediency. Particularly unpleasant was the outlandish outfit he was required to wear for up to 14 hours a day.

"The costume was uncomfortably *hot*," he complains. "Man was not meant to wear tights! God forbid if I ever went outside in the Sun—I would quickly get a layer of water between my legs and the tights. There is nothing worse than *sweating* in tights.

"The cape was made of double thick bridal satin. Because it hung so low down my back, I had to lean my head forward to compensate, so I had a sore

Though he played a character whose enthusiasm reached absurd levels, all wasn't rosy for Ward off-camera. "I was labeled a 'troublemaker,' " he reveals.

neck by the day's end. The mask completely restricted my field of vision. Worse than that, my eyelashes touched the mask, which made me blink and irritated my eyes."

Protecting beloved Gotham City from the dastardly deeds of nefarious evildoers, the athletic Ward risked personal injury due to chronic technical mishaps. "The special FX men didn't take enough precautions with the explosions," the actor charges. "I was hurt several times, and had to be taken to the hospital.

"On one of the Mr. Freeze episodes, I sensed that a particular charge was going to be highly dangerous. I closed my eyes just in time for the cue for the explosion. It's a good thing I did, because I was knocked down by the impact. Instead of going up, the explosion blew outwards. I had second and third degree burns on my face and arms. I was rushed to the hospital, and the doctor said that if my eyes had been open, I would have been *blind*."

In the midst of the three-ring circus that was *Batman*, the directors' only advice to Ward was, "Do it the way you want but be enthusiastic."

Sharpening his instinct for self-preservation, the usually cooperative Ward earned a reputation for temperamental behavior. "After those incidents, I naturally became cautious whenever there were any special FX explosions," he explains. "I didn't have the kind of cowl Adam had, to protect me from burns. I only wore a little mask, which meant I often had to be used in the close shots with the explosions because it was more difficult to double me with a stuntman.

"So I asked questions about the explosions. I wanted to know where the charges were, and in which direction they would go off. I wasn't trying to be a prima donna—I was concerned for my *safety*."

His intentions misunderstood, Ward alienated key members of the crew. "There *were* some people in the crew who didn't like me," he acknowledges. "They resented me because I was a young guy co-starring in a series without having knocked my brains out struggling for 20 years. The more popular I became with the audience, the more negative their attitude towards me."

Seeking satisfaction, Ward "eggs-acted" a suitably precocious revenge, when shooting a climactic fight scene with guest star Vincent Price as Egghead. "The crew was standing off to the side during the big egg fight," he recounts. "For every egg I threw at Egghead and his gang, I also threw one at the crew. I have a very accurate throwing arm, so I did it in such a way that they never knew where the eggs were coming from. It was *great* fun to see the crew running for cover."

His shenanigans inevitably created conflict with executive producer William Dozier (who doubled as the show's overwrought narrator). "I didn't want to get on his wrong side," Ward remarks. "He was a very powerful man, and I *felt* it. We were in two different worlds. I was just a lowly actor, and he was at the top of his profession.

"I only got into *serious* trouble with Dozier one time. I asked him for a raise. I got a real good talking to, instead. He sat me down in the middle of the office, and marched around me waving a riding crop. I was in such *fear* of him after that, I did anything to stay out of his way."

Supplementing his meager remuneration with generous fees for person-

Ward admits he had some troubles with the crew. "The more popular I became with the audience, the more negative their attitude towards me."

al appearances, Ward expected to reap further rewards by playing the title role in a star-making feature film during his *Batman* hiatus. His employers had other ideas.

"It was very sad," he laments. "I actually thought I *had* the part. But because the series was so hot, 20th Century Fox *didn't* want me to play a different character. They were afraid it would disrupt the show's success. The strings were pulled and an unknown actor named Dustin Hoffman got the role, instead. You may have heard of the film. It was called *The Graduate*."

Bitterly disappointed, Ward made his big-screen debut in less prestigious circumstances, donning his dreaded long underwear alongside Adam West in a 1966 *Batman* spin-off movie. "I wish they had put more effort into the script," he muses, "so it wouldn't have been just a giant TV show. I would have loved to do a first-rate, top-notch *Batman* feature. But Dozier and Fox just hurried the picture, to knock out a movie. It was too rushed and didn't have the stature of a real film. It *should* have been a lot better."

A short-lived phenomenon, *Batman* succumbed to audience apathy in 1968 after three tumultuous seasons, its demise hastened by escalating repetitiveness. "The writing and directing had become hackwork," Ward declares. "I tried to preserve the quality, because the show still meant so much to me, but I had no influence over such matters. I was labeled a 'troublemaker.' I was told, 'Don't ask so many questions. Just go *do* it.' "

Planning to parlay his Robin recognition into more varied film and TV work, Ward was appalled to discover his career had come grinding to a halt—almost before it had begun. "Show business is tough and vicious," he observes. "I came close to getting several movies and TV series. It usually came down to me and one other actor, and they *always* went with the other actor. The casting directors said I was so identified as Robin, that it would be hard to believe me in another role."

Consequently, Ward could only obtain part-time employment as a performer: In summer stock; in a Goodyear TV commercial; in such obscure exploitation films as *Scream, Night School* and *Fire in the Night*; and as the voice of Leader One in the animated series *Challenge of the Gobots*. Irrevocably attached to his Robin persona, he also reteamed with the similarly stereotyped Adam West as Batman for two TV superhero comedy specials, as the faceless voices behind the animated *New Adventures of Batman* in 1977, and for an endless array of personal appearances, in and out of costume.

Readjusting his perspective, Ward pursued ambitious goals in other areas of the entertainment industry. Reflecting his earlier tenure as a teen idol, he formed Entertainment Management Corporation, coordinating celebrity fan clubs and concert merchandising for musical artists.

Primarily surviving on his hard-won business acumen, Ward still yearns for recognition as a serious actor. A black belt in karate, he has remained in top physical condition. Currently, he's working on an autobiographical memoir of his days as Robin in collaboration with former *Batman* writer Stanley Ralph Ross.

"Man was not meant to wear tights!" exclaims Ward, who found his dynamic duds a trifle warm for the active work of bashing super-criminals.

Older and wiser, Ward remains grateful for the tantalizing—albeit troublesome—taste of acclaim he enjoyed in his youth.

"I learned a great deal from *Batman*," Burt Ward reflects. "It was an experience I will treasure forever. It gave me a fantastic opportunity. It has enabled me to meet and be welcomed by people throughout the world. Having seen me on television, they treat me as though I'm their friend, as though I've been in their home before.

"I truly believe I made a valuable contribution to the entertainment industry. I feel I made an equally valuable contribution through my work helping charities. I expect that my acting career will continue. I intend to accomplish much more in many different areas of my life—and I'm confident that you will continue hearing about me."

ANIMATED SIDEKICK

Loren Lester is by his hero's side voicing the animated Robin.

By KIM HOWARD JOHNSON

As the voice behind the Dark Knight's animated sidekick on *The Adventures of Batman & Robin*, Loren Lester is thrilled to have become part of the Batman legend. The actor was cast early on as Robin, even though he didn't become active on the series for quite some time.

"I had to read several times before I finally got the role," says Lester. "They did a pilot episode, and I didn't hear from them for a long time. I found out that they weren't using Robin in the series—it was just going to be Batman. Then, about halfway through the first season, they changed their minds and brought me in!"

Lester admits it was frustrating to be cast as the character, only to find out that Robin wouldn't be a part of the show. "I was pretty surprised. When I grew up, I was a Batman fanatic. I had a table next to my bed which I called the Batman Stand, and I covered it with Batman toys and comic books. I didn't understand the concept of Batman *without* Robin! When the first Batman movie came out, I didn't understand why they were doing it without Robin. Robin appeared in the comics very early on [Batman's first appearance was in *Detective #27*, while Robin was introduced in *Detective #38*]. He was such an integral part of the story, and I didn't understand why they had made that choice. But, they did make the choice, and thankfully, they reversed themselves!"

Photo: Courtesy Loren Lester

"I looked around the recording studio one day and said, 'Wow! I'm Robin!' " enthuses the voice of the animated Boy Wonder, Loren Lester.

Despite his love of Batman, it didn't affect Lester's audition. "It didn't sink in until I actually got the part and I had been doing them for a while," he says. "I looked around the recording studio one day and said, 'Wow! *I'm* Robin!' I couldn't believe it!"

Lester didn't have much trouble molding his voice for the Robin character in his audition. "Robin is a very excitable kind of guy—all of the dialogue since the audition has been the same, too. When I speak excitedly, my voice goes up quite a bit, and my voice sounds younger than I actually am. He's also very cocky, and the dialogue is written that way, so it's easy to play that."

A good rapport with Kevin Conroy, who supplies the voice for Batman, was the key to making the Dynamic Duo come alive.

"Ninety percent of the time we're in the studio together for a taping," reveals Loren Lester. "Sometimes Kevin would be shooting a movie and be gone for a few weeks, but most of the time we're together. I met Kevin during the pilot. He's a very nice, personable guy who made me feel at home, like I belonged there."

While he has been in the recording studio with many of the guest villains, Lester notes that some of them tape their performances without other cast members present. "I was in several episodes with Ed Asner, but I never met him, and I never met Adrienne Barbeau, the Catwoman. Alan Rachins, the Clock King, was always there, and so was Paul Williams, who plays the Penguin. Paul is very funny off-mike, and it's always fun on the days when he's there—his acting is just terrific! Richard Moll, who is Two-Face, is actually a lot like the character [Bull] he played on *Night Court*!"

Many of the guest stars look upon a part in *Batman & Robin* as *more* than just another voiceover job. "Richard and Paul always enjoyed it very much," says Lester. "Sometimes we would have a star there who was just there to do a character for one day. They acted like they were in a candy store! It was such a new and different experience for them, like, 'Wow, I'm doing a Batman cartoon!' William [*Greatest American Hero*] Katt was like that. It was pretty funny, because I would say, 'Yeah, but you do movies and TV,' and he would say, 'Yeah, but it's really interesting to be doing a cartoon show!' "

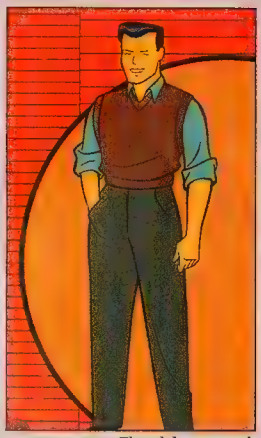
Lester also praises Mark Hamill's characterization of the Joker, while noting that Hamill wasn't initially cast

Batman & Related Characters: Copyright 1994, 1995 DC Comics Inc.

in the role. "He wasn't the original Joker. The original pilot was Kevin and me; Efrem Zimbalist wasn't on the show—it was actually Clive Revill, the British actor, playing Alfred. Tim [*Congo*] Curry was the original Joker, and he was brilliant. But they weren't asked back for some reason. The next thing I knew, Mark Hamill was the Joker, and he's great, too. Mark and Tim Curry are really different, and so are their interpretations."

Robin was kept in the background for much of the series' first season.

"They explained his absence in most of the shows that I wasn't in by saying that Robin was in college," says Lester. "In the current *Robin* comic book, he [the Tim Drake Robin] is a high school student, but in the TV show, they ship him off to Gotham University. So, when he comes to work with Batman, he's coming in from Gotham University. Now that the show is called *The Adventures of Batman & Robin*, and I was in all 20 new episodes, he's not at school anymore. They've dropped that whole part of the plot. He lives at Wayne Manor now, and works constantly with Batman."



Though he appeared infrequently in the original series, Robin and his alter-ego Dick Grayson are a fixture in *The Adventures of Batman & Robin*.

"They don't know I exist!" admits Lester, who was never in the running for the role of Robin in *Batman Forever*.

Apart from his voiceover roles, Lester has appeared on-camera as a hall monitor in *Rock and Roll High School*, was eaten by devilish pigs in *Evilspeak* and had a recurring role as Roy, the bakery delivery man on *The Facts of Life*. He has been doing voiceover acting for 20 years, but the role of Robin is something special. "I was particularly excited to be doing this series, more than any other voiceover job I've ever had," says Lester, noting his previous experience in animation and commercials. "My voice is heard in literally hundreds of radio and TV commercials all over the country. Right this minute, I'm the voice of Southwestern Bell, and I do a Coca-Cola spot that's on right now. I played Barbeque on *G.I. Joe*, so I had a Maine accent. I played Flash Gordon's son on *Defenders of the Earth*, and I was one of the *New Kids on the Block* when they were hot—I played Jordan, because the New Kids were too busy touring to record their voices for the cartoon. I also did a very spooky, strange show, *Real Monsters*, from the folks who do *The Simpsons*."

Lester doesn't alter his own voice a great deal for Robin. "The Robin voice is definitely higher, so I sound younger. There's also a self-assured cockiness that comes in because of the way the dialogue is written. I personally don't go around all day being tough and cynical, but then, I'm not dealing with bad guys all day! When Robin's dealing with bad guys, this sardonic, sarcastic, cynical thing creeps in that definitely affects my voice!"

The actor admits that there's undoubtedly some subliminal influence on his performances from Burt Ward, the original TV Robin. "I'm sure there is, somewhere in the back of my mind. How *could* I forget about Burt Ward?" he laughs. "I was *such* a fan of that show. There's a little bit of Burt in there, even if it is unconscious."

Lester credits their director for the successful recording sessions for *The Adventures of Batman & Robin*. "We have a wonderful [recording] director, Andrea Romano, who is the perfect combination of two things," he says. "She makes each session a fun, pleasurable experience, but

No cream puff hostage-at-the-ready, the animated Robin is tough, cocky and almost as quick with a batarang as his mentor.

she's all business, too. She knows exactly what she wants in the script, and knows exactly how to get it out of the actors. Sometimes sessions are a big waste of time, because people either don't know what they're doing, or they just waste a lot of time. Andrea doesn't waste time, and she's a real pleasure to work with."

A normal *Batman & Robin* recording session finds the actors all separated. "We go into the session and sit between two soundproof walls. It's the only show I've ever done this way. You actually don't see the actors you're working with. Many times, at other studios, you stand at music stands and you're all in the same room; you can see the other person as they're delivering their lines. In this show, we talk about being race horses inside our chutes. We can't see each other, but of course, we all wear our headphones and hear what everybody else is doing.

"At a typical session, we read a script through, and then Andrea explains what the animation would look like, when we're screaming. All the script might say is 'Aahhh!' She tells us, 'You just fell off the building.' So, we would know to make the 'I'm falling off the building' sound. Then, when we're done doing the read-through, we'll sit down at our microphones and record the show in order, skipping any lines of people who aren't there."

As in almost all animation, the voices are done *prior* to the drawings. "Each session normally takes about two to three hours," he says. "Then, they ship off the voice track overseas, and it comes back months later in a rough version. Very often, what we originally recorded doesn't quite work with the animation that they've made. For example, they might have originally conceived of a scene as one of the characters shouting, and when the animation comes back, the character is standing right next to the person he's shouting at—it just doesn't work! So, we go back in to do what we call ADR—additional dialogue recording—to replace that."

Lester jokes that his favorite scripts are "the ones that feature Robin. I like when Robin becomes an integral part of the story, and offers his own ideas or solutions to problems. Very often, some of the scripts will have Robin saying, 'What are we going to do, Batman?' 'What does this mean?' 'I don't get it!' That gets a little tedious after a while. My personal favorite episode is the one with the Riddler, where we're put into a maze—Robin is actively trying to solve the puzzle, because he has played this game before on his computer and knows the solutions to some of the questions. I enjoyed that—I got to save Batman a couple of times in that one, so it was fun!"

Batman Forever brings Robin into the current series of Batman films, but Lester admits he hasn't seen any clips of Chris O'Donnell as Robin. "All I've seen are posters. They have him in a costume that I've never seen. I've seen all the different faces of Robin, the different names and looks that Robin has had, and this one is completely different. It's just like the Tim Burton Batman is totally different—he's unlike *anything* that you see in any of the comics. Needless to say, I was not asked to read for it—they don't know I exist!"

The actor is currently waiting to hear whether new episodes will be shot, and is encouraging fans to write to Fox to ask for more shows. The fan-turned-pro also notes proudly that he still has all of his childhood Batman toys. "I have *everything*. I have a Batman puppet and a Batman lunchbox and a Batman utility belt with a climbing rope and a gun and Batcuffs! I went to a toy convention recently and found out what that's worth. I suppose I could sell it all and make a lot of money, but I just couldn't part with any of it!"

Loren Lester admits it's pretty amazing to have Batman and Robin back in his adult life. "All of these toys take on a new meaning now that I'm doing Robin. If you had told me when I was a kid collecting that stuff that one day *I* would be playing Robin, I would have probably fainted or something!"

"He's a very nice, personable guy who made me feel at home, like I belonged there," Lester notes of Kevin Conroy, the voice of Batman.

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"They explained his absence in most of the shows I wasn't in by saying that Robin was at college," says Lester. That situation continued in the comics.

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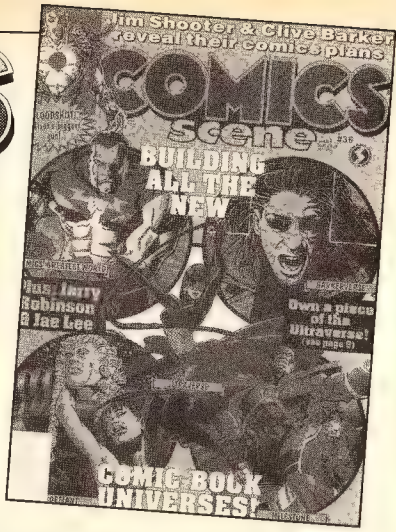
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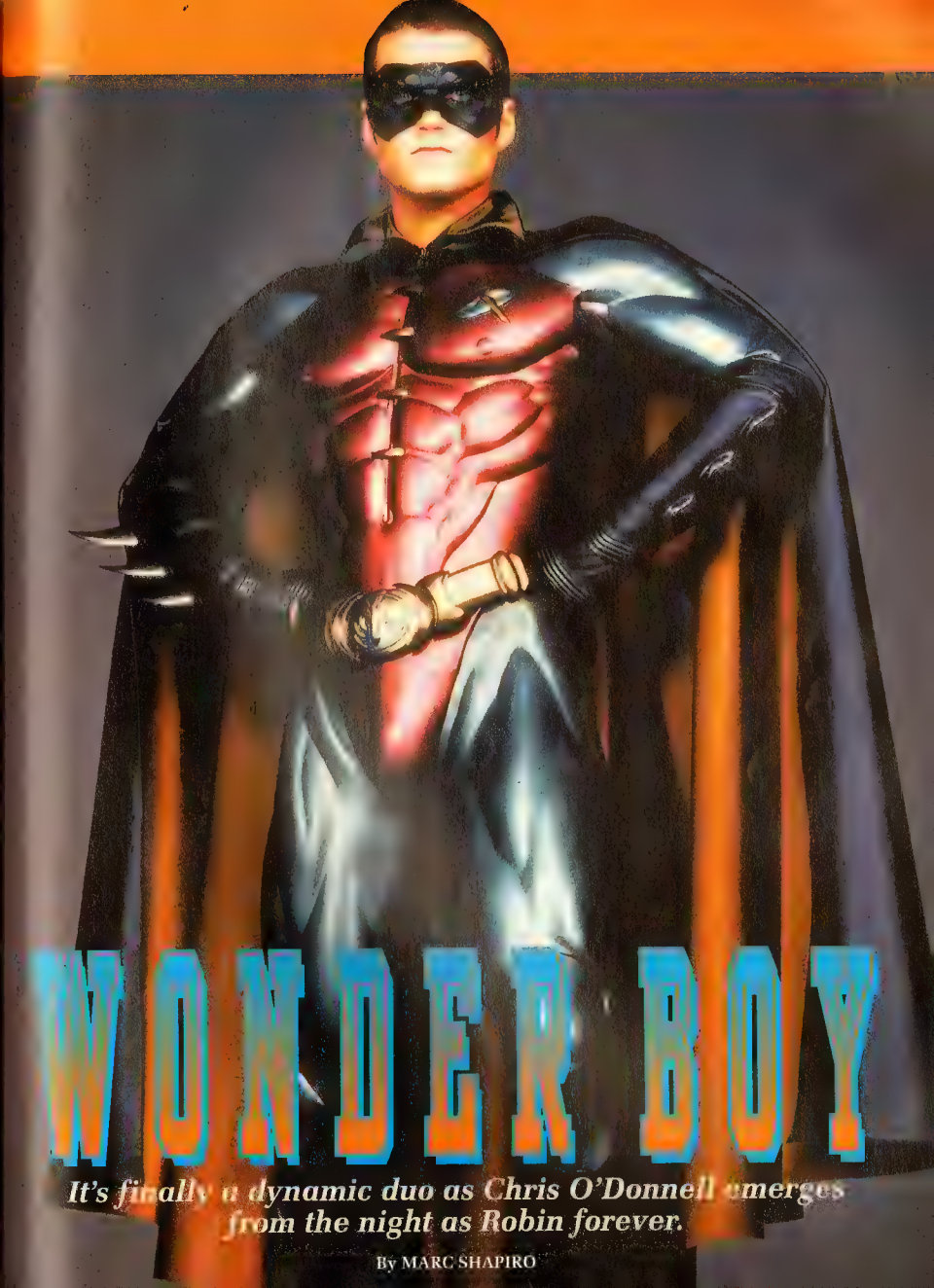


WONDER BOY

It's finally a dynamic duo as Chris O'Donnell emerges from the night as Robin forever.

By MARC SHAPIRO

Photo: Ralph Nelson

"He's much tougher than Robin is in the comics," explains O'Donnell. "He's a cocky kid who rides a motorcycle and wears a leather jacket."

Chris O'Donnell had met with Joel Schumacher a few years ago and the director let it slip that he might be doing *Batman Forever*. But there was nothing in the conversation that indicated there might be a place in the film for O'Donnell. So, the actor forgot about it, went on with his career and eventually traveled to Ireland to shoot the romantic comedy *Circle of Friends*.

"But while I was making that film, I got a call from my agent, telling me that I had been offered the part of Robin," O'Donnell explains. "Man, I was psyched! I thought, 'This is going to be great.' "

O'Donnell, last seen in the action arena as D'Artagnan in Disney's re-remake of *The Three Musketeers*, marvels at the latest Dark Knight adventure. "This movie was like a spectacle," he says. "There was all this action, all these gadgets. I got to drive the Batmobile and the Batboat. It's like I was literally dropped right in the middle of a comic book."

He laughingly recalls that he got the first hint of what it would be like being Robin when he was cast in a plaster body mold for the hi-tech Robin costume that he wears late in the film. But he didn't truly feel like the Boy Wonder until he put on the finished outfit, ventured out of his trailer and ambled onto the set.

"I was walking out to the set and I happened to pass a mirror. I thought, 'Wait a second! It's *Robin*!' Being in the costume made it much easier to get into character because, when you're wearing the costume, you begin to feel like a superhero."

O'Donnell notes that his initial enthusiasm for the role was fueled by his first look at the *Batman Forever* script. "I grew up watching the *Batman* TV show, but that didn't scare me, because I knew I wasn't going to be playing the Burt Ward version of Robin. I knew this was going to be different from the TV show just because of how different the first two Batman movies were. This Robin is totally different."

The young actor, who enjoyed Richie Rich and Spider-Man comics as a kid but had little contact with the Batman titles, was given some issues to study up on the hero. He discovered that Robin's "circus death of his parents" origin had been more or less faithfully adapted for the movie. But he also claims that *Batman Forever* paints a tougher picture of the Boy Wonder.

"Dick Grayson has this circus background and has been living on the road, so he's much tougher than Robin is in the comics. He's a cocky kid who rides a motorcycle and wears a leather jacket. The death of his parents proves to be a very traumatic experience for him and it makes him all the more determined to avenge their deaths and to get back at Two-Face."

O'Donnell points out that the Dick Grayson-Bruce Wayne relationship is at the core of the *Batman Forever* storyline, and that it is a relationship focusing on the similarity of their origins. Both saw their parents die before their eyes, murdered by criminals. "Dick looks at people like Bruce Wayne and resents them. He doesn't like Bruce at first. And because Robin's origin mirrors Batman's, Bruce is very

Photo: Ralph Nelson

Look everybody! It's the Boy Wonder! Just change "boy" to "man" and "wonder" to "stud" and you'll have Chris O'Donnell, Robin of *Batman Forever*.

Photo: Ralph Nelson

O'Donnell is loving his time in the Bat-spotlight. "It's like I was literally dropped right into the middle of a comic book."

sympathetic to Dick. But Dick doesn't want to have anything to do with Bruce because there's a basic distrust of him. Bruce keeps telling Dick that they're basically the same and that he doesn't understand. But Dick's response is, 'Look, buddy! We have *nothing* in common.' This Dick Grayson offers much more of a challenge to Batman. He doesn't just follow whatever Batman says. He stands up to him."

For O'Donnell, there were quite a few memorable moments in *Batman Forever*. He says that his scenes with Alfred (Michael Gough) "came out pretty well." He also liked the idea of "getting to beat up [martial arts action star] Don 'The Dragon' Wilson" in the scene where, after stealing the Batmobile for a joyride, Robin saves a woman of the night from a gang of thugs. And, he shudders, there was also one very scary moment.

"We did this shot a couple of days ago where I was weighted down at the bottom of a pool for a scene in which Robin is being attacked by frogmen. They were shooting a close-up, where the Bat breathing device I'm using is ripped out of my mouth and I'm struggling like I can't breathe. And all the time I'm thinking, 'What if I really *couldn't* breathe? Will they think I'm just acting or that I'm really drowning?' At one point, they were handing me another breathing device and the water was so murky that I had trouble finding it. Boy! *That* was scary!"

"This Dick Grayson offers much more of a challenge to Batman," O'Donnell says. "He doesn't just follow whatever Batman says. He stands up to him."

All Photos. Courtesy Warner Bros./Trademark & Copyright 1995 DC Comics Inc./Design & Layout: Yvonne Jang

Like other Bat fans, O'Donnell was on the line when both previous Batman movies opened. And the verdict? "The first one was wild. I thought it was so cool and Jack Nicholson was so funny as the Joker. *Batman Returns* was just too dark for me. I thought Catwoman was just so damned sexy, but the film was too dark. *Batman Forever* doesn't have that problem," he continues. "There's a certain haunting quality to it, but it's nowhere near as dark. This is literally a comic book."

O'Donnell is well aware of the uproar that arose in the comic-book community when Michael Keaton was chosen as Batman. He has no idea what kind of feedback has greeted new Batman Val Kilmer, but he does say that, so far, there has been no backlash against him.

"Maybe if I jumped on America On-Line or Prodigy, I might learn something, but so far, I haven't heard anything about *any* group being upset about my playing Robin. I *do* know that many people who went to the previous two movies came out saying, 'Where the hell's Robin?' "

The actor speculates that Robin *might* have worked in the first two films, but that it would have required a radical change in the storylines. He concedes that being the actor who will finally bring Robin to the screen will do wonders for his career.

"But it is a breakthrough for the films," Chris O'Donnell says. "Robin is pivotal to this film's storyline and, even though he isn't in the movie from the get-go, his storyline is important to the course the film takes. Robin is definitely setting up a new era for future Batman films. Because at the end of this movie, it's not just Batman anymore.

"Now it's Batman *and* Robin."

DESIGNING DREDD

Nigel Phelps creates the world of Judge Dredd's Mega-City One.

By JOE NAZZARO & SHEELAGH J. WELLS

"I had many ideas on where to take the film because of working on *Batman* and having that familiarity under my belt," notes Phelps.

In recent years, Britain's venerable Shepperton Studios has been the home of some fairly unusual sights. Whether it was the medieval milieu of *Robin Hood: Prince of Thieves*, the spaced-out world of the BBC cult comedy series *Red Dwarf* or, most recently, the Gothic architecture of *Mary Shelley's Frankenstein*, the soundstages of Shepperton have doubled for many strange settings.

That said, perhaps none of these efforts have been as ambitious in design and execution as the towering cityscapes of the latest big-budget action-adventure epic, *Judge Dredd*. Based on the long-running British comic book series, and starring action icon Sylvester Stallone, the film is set in Earth's Third Millennium, after the planet has been virtually wiped out by a series of uncontrollable natural disasters. Only a few walled "Mega" cities remain, separating mankind from a desolated landscape called the "Cursed Earth."

While the retro-futuristic skylines of *Judge Dredd* are already familiar to countless comics fans, it took the artistic vision of production designer Nigel Phelps to bring them to three-dimensional life. From the massive Hall of Justice, where the Council of Judges sits in session, to the bustling streets of Mega-City One, it was Phelps and his team of more than 20 painters, sculptors and craftspeople who created the world of *Judge Dredd* from the ground up.

As one approaches Phelps' office in the heart of *Judge Dredd*'s art department, it's easy to see the phenomenal amount of work that went into designing this film. Both walls of the long corridor are lined with endless full-color paintings depicting key scenes and characters from the film. Like the comic books, everything looks impossibly bulky and over-muscular; even the robots and motorcycles appear to have been injected with a massive

All Judge Dredd Photos: Richard Blanshard /Copyright 1995 Cinergi Pictures & Cinergi Productions NV

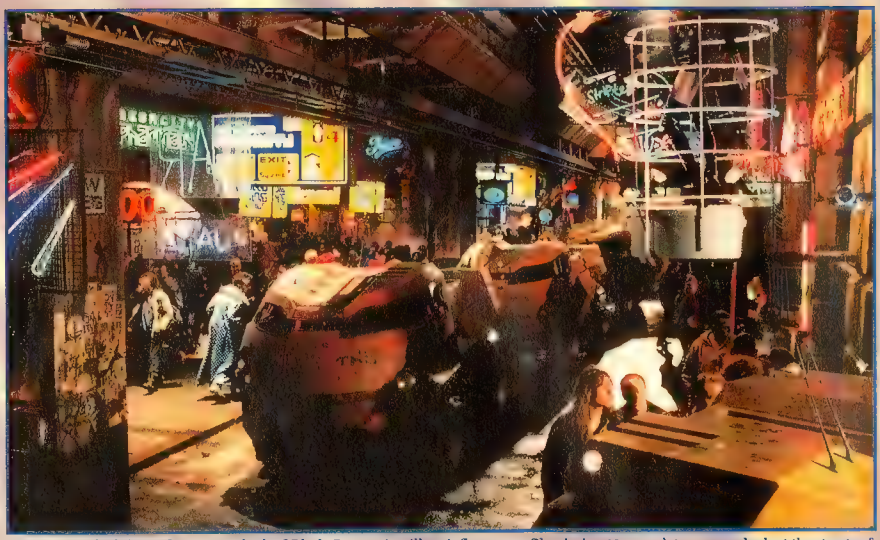
"We can texture-map all the reflective surfaces near the top and as you move down, it starts getting darker and rustier," explains Phelps of his Mega-City design.

amount of steroids.

Inside Phelps' cramped command center, models and maquettes compete for shelf space with art books by Antonio Gaudí and H.R. Giger. The room is dominated by a giant three-dimensional model of Mega-City One, as New York will come to be known in the 22nd century. Phelps uses the detailed model to illustrate his ideas for designing the dark and fairly pessimistic world of *Judge Dredd*.

"Basically, I started with some of the elements already established in the comic," he explains, "such as the fact that this is a walled city. I thought it would be cool if we had a walled society that had a lot of changing aspects. I also wanted to keep it true to New York in terms of its topography, as opposed to something like *Batman*, which was more of a fantasy.

"With this film, we had a much more blatant, futuristic vision, which is more literal in a sense, but still on an epic scale. The result is that we've kept the high points of midtown and downtown New York topography, but at the city's top, it's totally different from the architectural style of what we're seeing at street level, which has references to current New York. That layering approach is being exploited to the fullest, with social levels growing vertically up the scale.



The neon-soaked slum-of-tomorrow look of *Blade Runner* is still an influence on film design 10 years later, as one look at the streets of Mega-City One will attest.

"There are many metallic buildings at the top, and we'll be doing some computer enhancements with miniatures. We can texture-map all the reflective surfaces near the top, and as you move down, it starts getting darker and rustier. By the time we get down to the street, it's very red, so there we have all the rusts, oils and different aesthetic elements. This layering approach is something we touched on a bit in *Batman*, but here, we're *really* exploiting it to the fullest."

It's hardly surprising that Phelps would point to Tim Burton's dark superhero fantasy as a seminal influence on his work for *Judge Dredd*. It was the late *Batman* production designer Anton Furst who gave Phelps, then an art school student, his start in the business.

"Anton was a very big influence on my work. When I met him, I was looking for a job to subsidize my grant, so the film world as such wasn't a career I had ever thought about or considered. I was a painter, oblivious to the fact that there was an art side to show business.

"I worked with Anton for 10 years as his assistant, starting on *The Company of Wolves* as a sketch artist. I then worked as art director on *Full Metal Jacket*, as well as *Batman*. Those were the biggest pictures, although there were quite a number of other projects. We had a development deal at Columbia Pictures, so I went to the United States to be his production designer on upcoming projects, but of course that all got cut a bit short."

After Furst's death, Phelps decided to stay in America, where he had little difficulty finding work. "It was all pretty good, because while I was working with Anton, I was also doing commercials. We had a year apart, for instance, while he was doing *Awakenings*, and I spent that time doing commercials. It all helps give you self-confidence. I loved working with Anton, so there was never an ego thing of wanting to work on my own. Then, when he died, I decided to stay in LA, and started getting into the commercial and music-video end of the business."

When the opportunity arose to work on *Judge Dredd*, one of the most ambitious films to be shot on British soil in recent years, Phelps knew he couldn't pass it up. In fact, his involvement with the project began long before director Danny (*The Young Americans*) Cannon came aboard.

"There was another director who originally approached me, Marco Brambilla [who directed Stallone's previous SF outing, *Demolition Man*]. He introduced me to Ed Pressman, one of *Dredd*'s executive producers, and I went to all those meetings. Then, when Danny came on the scene, he really liked my ideas, we got on well and he wanted me for the job.

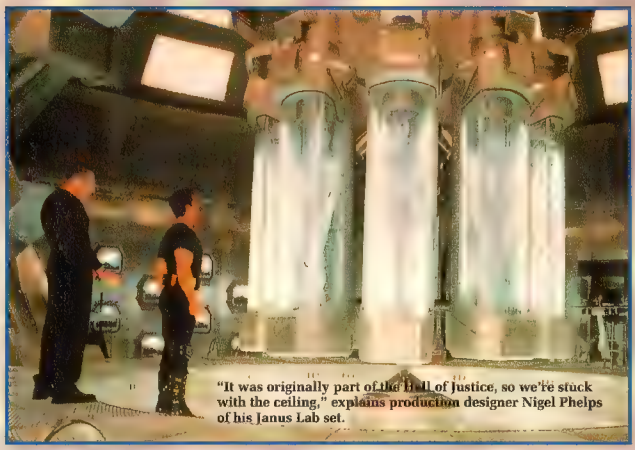
"Right from the outset, I had many ideas on to where to take the film, because of working on *Batman* and having that familiarity under my belt. When we started working on *Batman*, it was more a case of, 'Jesus, where do we start?' "

Phelps began working with a team of concept artists, who started creating the visual parameters for *Judge Dredd*'s

A staple of British SF comics since 1977, *Judge Dredd* was a natural for adaptation into one of today's ultra-violent, take-no-prisoners, mega-action flicks.

post-apocalyptic, 22nd-century world. "I was in LA for three months, working with film illustrators Simon Murton, Matthew Codd and Kevin Walker, who's a comic-book artist.

"While we were in LA, there really weren't any restrictions. You know what sets are involved, but in terms of conjuring up this world and its inhabitants, we didn't have any limits. Once we came [back to England], it was a case of knuckling down and deciding what we *could* and *couldn't* do."



"It was originally part of the Hall of Justice, so we're stuck with the ceiling," explains production designer Nigel Phelps of his Janus Lab set.

Because so many of the film's elements had to be designed virtually from scratch, Phelps had to assemble an immense team of artists to create it all. "We had millions of them!" jokes the designer. "At one point, I think we had 20 people working on this project. After spending three months in LA and then six months' prep here, the next step was to get a supervising art director. Les Tomkins is brilliant; I worked with him on *Batman* and *Full Metal Jacket*, and Anton would always use him as well. Les has been doing this since he was 15, so he's worked on an infinitely greater number of films than I have. He has been a big asset as far as having someone to talk to, and has really been my right-hand man.

"We picked art directors to focus on specific areas. There's Kevin Phipps, who was responsible for the backlot, and Dave Alladay, whose focus was all the vehicles. Different sets were allocated to different people, so Martin Laing was responsible for most of the interior sets, such as the Hall of Justice.

"There was also Julian Caldow, whom I also worked with on *Batman*, and Chris Halls, a comic-book artist who's an excellent modelmaker as well. Chris was making many of the maquettes before going to the full-size models. There are many stages when you're designing a film like this one. You start by talking about it, then you get to the hard visuals. Those visuals are rationalized into working drawings. Then you make the models, and finally you build the sets. During each of those stages, you're forever changing things and re-analyzing them.

"Unlike most films," Phelps continues, "we were also designing and building vehicles, guns and all the props. I could have made it easier on everybody, and there are so many compromises one can make in terms of the design aesthetic, but in trying to make this a pure vision of the future, you really can't draw on any older references. The one time we've done that, but got away with it beautifully, is with the Land Rovers. They built 31

Laying down the law in Mega-City One is Sylvester Stallone as Judge Dredd, the latest dark comic-book hero to make it to the big screen.

Phelps' Mega-City One retains some of the undertones of the original New York City and builds on them extensively.

Art: Brian Holland

On his approach to designing *Dredd*, Phelps explains, "Basically, I started with some of the elements already established in the comic."

vehicles for us, and did a really brilliant job. It's something that helped us, and they're pleased; it has helped them as well.

"If we had to build those vehicles, we would only have been able to afford a half-dozen of them. There is 'X' amount in the budget allocated to create a form of traffic where we needed 35 cars, so having the Land Rovers was a godsend for us. The other, cheaper alternative would have been to buy military vehicles, as we did for the Sarasens, but we've given them a different front, with a hooded arrangement, a large bumper and bigger wheels. They look great, and the aesthetic is perfect. They don't look like armored vehicles, just big bruisers."

Despite the number of different departments, each with their own area of responsibility, Phelps says there's still a visual consistency to the film, whether one's looking at the Lawmaster cycles, a flying shuttlecraft or the ABC Robot, one of *Judge Dredd*'s highlights.

"With something like the robot, when we started off, *everything* had to be slightly over-scaled, large and over-muscled. Whether it was the guns or costumes, it had to be a bit larger than life. The robot was no exception to that rule. In our first attempt, it was much more rounded, but during the process, we concluded that by keeping rounded shapes, faceting them off and creating more of a stealth appearance, that was the way to homogenize everything.

"When we came to the Aspen Shuttle, a low-speed, low-hanging hovercraft that takes prisoners from Mega-City One to Aspen, it was really difficult to make it look aggressive because the craft moved at low speeds. That was a very challenging one to crack, but as soon as we added all the facets, which we had already done subconsciously with the buildings, it finally worked. That's when we said, 'We should have done it with the robot!' We went back and reworked the design, which became leaner, more angular, and worked much better."

While a great deal of money has obviously been spent to make *Judge Dredd*, Phelps was able to stretch his budget even further by re-using certain sets, while designing others as a series of modular components. "There's a lot of money on this film, but never enough. No matter what you're doing, hopefully your vision is always going to be bigger than you can afford, so we've had to be quite smart with how we revamp sets.

"With the Academy sets, for example, they're designed as components that you can stand on their side. There are other sets that can be turned upside down into another, so there's still the flavor of being in the same building. They're like building blocks that can be moved around. When we finish with them on stage, we pull them out to the backlot and use them again. Anything we can reuse, we do as long as you're not blatantly aware of seeing something twice.

"Ultimately, when you're talking about such a broad design as this, you

Dredd Details

Peter Young is busy solving the latest in a string of problems that invariably crop up during the shooting of a big-budget action-adventure like *Judge Dredd*. The busy set decorator is trying to get Judge Griffin's apartment ready for filming tomorrow, but that task has been difficult, to say the least.

According to Young, Griffin's apartment has turned out to be "an absolute pain. I don't know whether it's exhaustion, economy, lack of communication or whatever. This set has changed color four times, and every time it changes, the decor has to be adjusted. Tomorrow, they'll shoot it and it'll be over, but right now, it's proving very difficult.

"For me, SF is very tricky," Young continues. "I don't avoid it, because I like the challenge, but there are so many elements that must be addressed. In this room, for

He may strike some as a little short for the role, but Stallone looks positively Dreddful in his Judge gear for the film.

expect to see certain elements repeating themselves, whether you're inside or outside. When you're in Rome, how many different columns are you going to see? I don't have a problem with that at all, because in the end, it means the film is going to be that much richer, with more power to it."

To illustrate some examples of what he has been talking about, Phelps offers to act as an unofficial tour guide to some of the sets that are either under construction or not being used at the moment.

The first stop is Judge Griffin's office, which is being dressed for tomorrow's shooting. The set is heavily influenced by the Art Deco movement: black enamel, reflective surfaces, metal objects. To the left, a fireplace is flanked by a large couch; directly ahead, a polished black desk dominates one end of the room. Large windows open onto an empty stage, where painted backgrounds or lighting effects can be added from outside.

This set is being prepared for a scene in which Judge Griffin (Jurgen Prochnow) confronts Dredd's nemesis Rico (Armand Assante), along with his robotic servant. "There's going to be a dawn background in here," explains Phelps, "and when Griffin arrives home, he finds Rico sitting in his chair and the robot steaming way, and there's quite a bit of tense dialogue.

"We were talking earlier about reusing bits of the set again and again. These walls were all used in the Hall of Justice, and now we're reusing them for Griffin's office with a different finish on them. We ended up making the columns and windows the signatures to this room.

"Right now, we're pulling up the carpet, because sometimes you don't know how a set is going to film until it has been dressed. Taking the carpet up will make the room seem much colder, more like an office, and we also get the example, Danny [Cannon, the film's director] didn't like the sofa. It has a false back, because the robot has to sit right where the actual back has to drop down. We're restricted in terms of the color, because the couch has to have a rusty robot sitting on it, so it can't be bright pink or green. Secondly, it must have a pulley arm for the robot coming through the back, so there are certain requirements that the special FX and props people have. It's not just the set decorator or art department's sole prerogative. There are many joint problems."

One of Young's biggest challenges was finding objects that were futuristic and yet not totally unfamiliar. "I know that both Danny and Nigel [Phelps] like the work of certain designers, but it has been very difficult to get their work within our budget, and duplicates of those items, because everything has to explode or is riddled with bullet holes. That has been very stressful and difficult to achieve.

"Because of budgetary restrictions, most of our props had to be designed and built from scratch. The props that must be duplicated or blown up in the block war sequences, or in Hammond and Hershey's apartment, have been commissioned and made by art students and modelmakers."

A veteran of *Batman*, the first three *Superman* films and *Supergirl*, Peter Young is looking forward to taking a break from comics heroes after *Judge Dredd*. "They're not a problem once they're in the past, but hopefully they *are* a problem at the time. If they're not, you aren't stretching yourself to the challenge. It's easy to fall back on clichés if you're not trying to reassess what you're doing.

"Usually what happens when you're doing SF or modern films is you want to work on a period film. You want tatter and rustic and animals and farmyards. If it works out and you do get to work on a period film, when you're immersed in farmyards and mud, all you long to do is hi-tech and SF, blood, gore and metal. It's very sick, but that's how it is."

—Joe Nazzaro & Sheelagh J. Wells

Just what kind of executive knickknacks does a guy from the next century have on his desk? Just ask set decorator Peter Young.

***Big* was the key for *Dredd* according to Phelps. "With something like the robot, *everything* had to be slightly over-scaled, large and over-muscled."**

benefit of the reflections. Between the columns, the floor and the firelight, we're going to get a really nice graphic in here.

"There are all sorts of throwaway props in here," says Phelps, indicating some of the objects on Griffin's desk. "Every set has dozens of them. It gets very complicated trying to work out what props can be hired in, and the ones you absolutely must design and build."

As set decorator Peter Young and his team move in to finish dressing the set, Phelps offers a quick tour of the Janus Lab, which is still under construction. On the way, he points to a full-size mockup of the Statue of Liberty, which is also being built. A group of carpenters are gathered around the neck and head of Lady Liberty, consulting a detailed set of blueprints. The soon-to-be finished set will be used in the film's climax, in which Rico and Dredd engage in a life-and-death battle atop the statue's crown.

"Mind the steps," Phelps cautions, indicating a narrow set of metal stairs that lead up to the Janus Lab set, an impressive collection of steel and plexiglass that, at the moment, is a veritable beehive of activity. The chamber is filled with carpenters, painters, riggers, metal workers and FX technicians; beneath the transparent floor panels, a pair of electricians are wiring up a series of lights.

"The Janus Lab is supposed to be under the Statue of Liberty," says Phelps. "It's part of a secret project that was started 20 years ago. We find out in the story that Dredd and Rico are actually brothers; they're clones, and in this scene, we'll be seeing a number of other clones, including some that will come out of slots in the walls.

"When we first come down here, this room will be very dimly lit, with everything under wraps, and that [Phelps points to a huge piece of machinery that descends from the ceiling] will be back up near the top. This is a very difficult set, especially as a revamp, because it's in the wrong position on stage. It was originally part of the Hall of Justice, so we're stuck with the ceiling even though it's all worked out pretty well."

Eventually, each of the sliding drawers will be occupied by one of the several clone mannequins created by makeup designer Nick Dudman (STARLOG #146), or live actors in prosthetic makeup. The drawers will be recessed into the wall, but when Rico activates the Janus program, the half-finished clones are released from their containers. "There will be about 16 practical ones; some slide out manually when the camera isn't looking. At the moment, the FX people are also getting ready in here, so it's a real nightmare!"

On one side of the set, a collection of dirty pipes and machinery frame the lab entrance. In sharp contrast to the rest of the set, this section looks decidedly dusty and unattended. "That will be the staircase down from the Statue of Liberty, so we've tried to maintain some of those architectural motifs. That part will look very dingy, and then the door will open into here. Again, the robot will be in this sequence. There's a big fight scene that goes on in here, and everything gets blown up."

With so much activity going on at once, it seems almost impossible that several departments can work together, literally side by side, but Phelps maintains that constant communication is the key. "With a film of this scope, there has to be a lot of talking, and we all have to be speaking the same language as much as possible. Everyone here is very like-minded. That's the advantage of having a lot of drawings and visual reference. When you describe something, everyone's perception of what you're describing is different, so the more hard visuals you have to lay in front of them, the more it helps bridge any of those problems with communication or interpretation. So far, we haven't had any of those problems."

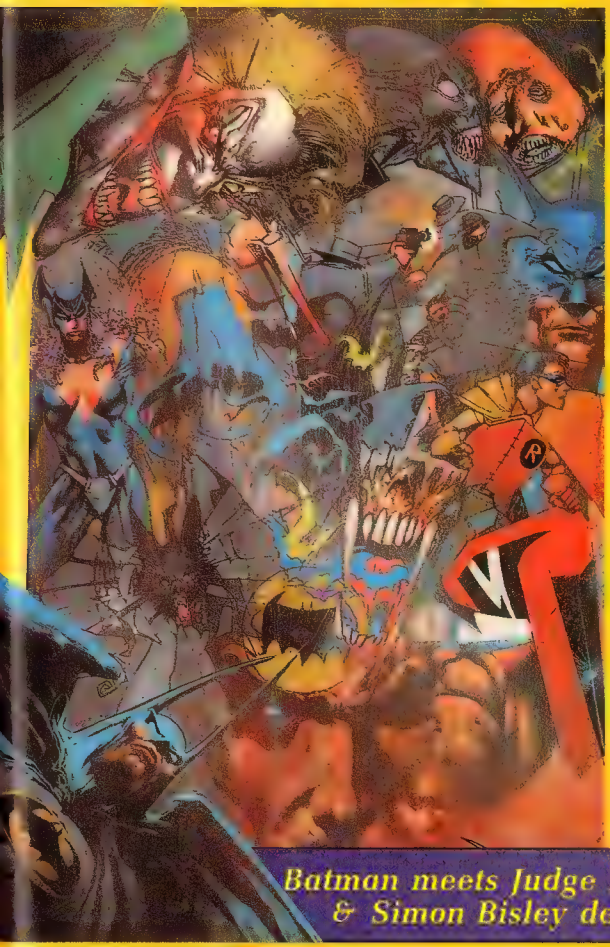
Almost on cue, Phelps' beeper goes off; producer Beau Marks has several matters requiring the designer's attention back in the art department. Apologies are made, but not before Phelps takes a few moments to mention the highlights of his work on *Judge Dredd*.

"Ultimately, it's the entire picture," Nigel Phelps claims. "I don't like to pull out individual aspects, because I'm pleased with *all* of it. Some elements more satisfying than others, but ultimately, what we're designing here aren't great environments to live in, or great toys to play with. What we're trying to design is a believable world that works for the film. I've seen the rushes and they look brilliant. I'm just so impressed by it all."

Design & Layout: Yvonne Jang

In order to produce a complete and believable vision of the future, Phelps and his design team had to design everything from the ground up.

CONVERSATIONS IN JUDGMENT



Batman meets Judge Dredd. Alan Grant & Simon Bisley deliver the verdict.

By STAN NICHOLLS

Four years after its conception, and surrounded by an avalanche of hype, Judgment on Gotham *finally appeared in late 1991. Teaming Batman and Judge Dredd, two of today's most popular comic characters, the graphic novel is the first joint offering from DC and Britain's Fleetway.*

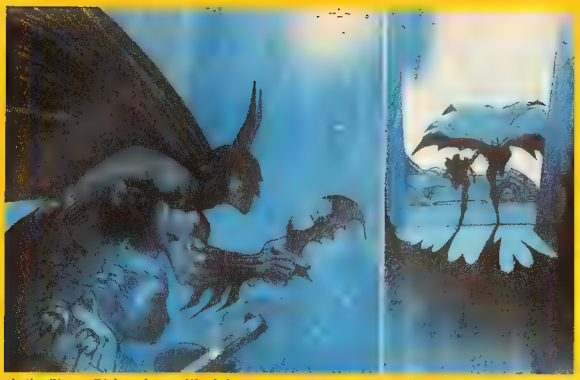
Why the delay? Given the level of fan and corporate expectations, the powers-that-be wanted to be extra sure they picked a creative team capable of bringing it off.

The careful selection paid off. Judgment on Gotham *was scripted by* Dredd *veterans John Wagner and Alan Grant, and illustrated by Simon Bisley. Grant (previously profiled in CS #16-17) joined Bisley for these conversations in judgment.*

COMICS SCENE: Did you work to a tight schedule on the book?

SIMON BISLEY: The schedule was *very* tight, which was a bit worrying. It was a high-pressure job. For years, people had been waiting for this thing, and it was on my shoulders to get it finished.

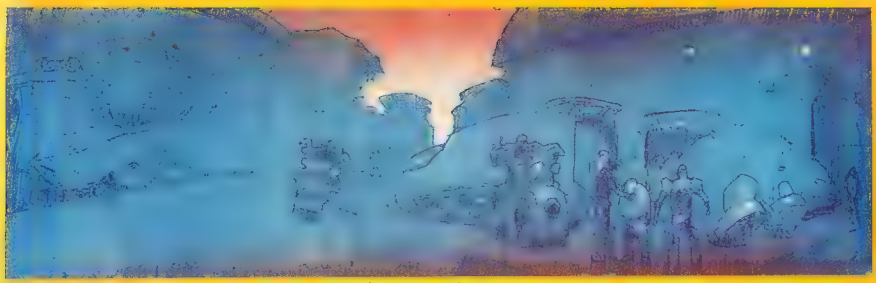
ALAN GRANT: As far as the writing was concerned, it took John Wagner and I quite a bit longer than we anticipated. The original plot we came up with involved Judge Dredd and Batman battling each other much more than in the final version; it was a kind of Justice versus Law thing. That was approved by [editors] Denny O'Neil at DC and Steve MacManus at Fleetway. But when John and I sat down to actually write the thing, it was a real effort. We spent a couple of weeks trying to work this story up into a script before we said, "To hell with it."



Artist Simon Bisley always liked the Dark Knight "visually, at least."

CS: What was wrong it?
GRANT: It had all-new villains who hadn't been seen in any comic before, but they weren't very funny characters, so we went back to the old villains to give the story humor, which we considered a very important element. For instance, when you see Scarecrow for the first time, he's inside the Gotham City morgue. He has a drill and he's boring into the skulls of corpses to drain off their brain fluids for some concoction he's making.
BISLEY: We're all laughing at that, but it's not funny, is it? It's shocking. Well, isn't it? Think of a kid picking the book up and saying, "Hey, Dad, look at this guy drinking gunk out of dead people's heads." [*Dissolves in giggles.*] Well, maybe it's the sort of thing that appeals to the British sense of humor...
CS: You were working with two big companies in their first collaboration and two high-profile characters. Did any of this present problems?
BISLEY: It was difficult in respect to giving each character their bit, as it were. For example, the editor would say, "There's not enough Batman on this page, there's more Dredd; let's have them equalized." But Alan and John overcame much of that in the script. The cover took a long time to conceive because we couldn't do anything too obscure. It had to be commercial. We were ages trying to work that out. Actually, I would have been quite happy with simply "Judgment on Gotham," on a black cover, with the words embossed. It would have been just as powerful, if not more so.
GRANT: We didn't have much trouble with either DC or Fleetway.
CS: Did you have any difficulty in respect to your creative interpretation of the characters?
GRANT: At one point only, and it was something we should have known. In the first scene, Batman encounters Judge Death and they have a fight. Now, Judge Death's gimmick is that he can't be killed, but Batman doesn't know that and actually kills his body and looses his spirit. Denny O'Neil quite rightly wasn't happy at having Batman kill a character before he knew that the guy couldn't be killed, if you see what I mean. Batman does *not* kill; that's one of his things. Dredd kills without thinking twice.
CS: Do you see any similarities between Batman and Dredd?
BISLEY: I'm not aware of similarities.
GRANT: The differences between them are greater than the similarities. The similarity is that they're both really tough. The difference is that Batman has a heart, whereas Dredd *doesn't*. Dredd obeys the law, whether the law is right or wrong; Batman tries to serve the interests of justice. He tries to be fair.
BISLEY: He's a goody-goody, a sort of knight in shining armor.
GRANT: Yeah. Batman's a goody goody; Dredd's the kind of thug you hire as a bouncer. But I think that in a straight fight, no weapons, Batman would beat Dredd. He's driven by an inner demon Dredd doesn't have.
CS: Do you have any affection for either of them?
BISLEY: I used to dislike Dredd intensely, but the more I worked on him, the more I started to like the guy. I've always liked Batman -visually at least. He's very theatrical and dramatic, with the billowing cloak and big horns and everything. He's great.
GRANT: Batman has been my favorite character since I was five or six years old. I've written Judge Dredd for more than 10 years, but I dislike him. He's not a nice guy. I enjoy writing stories about Dredd, because it's great writing about anybody who

YOU CALL THAT JUSTICE?
SLAM!
NOT JUST A TECHNICALITY, NOW, CREEP! JUDGE ASSAULT--TEN YEARS!
THUD-D!
OOFF
MAKE IT TWENTY!
COME ! YOU KEEP BREAKING THE LAW-- I'LL KEEP COUNTING!
TIME WELL WITH YOUR LAW!
BREAK THEM UP!



The Dark Knight may be Gotham City's protector, but he's in for a different reception in Mega-City One.

gets away with the sort of stuff he does, but there's no way I could feel affection for him.

CS: Does that feeling feed back into your treatment of him?

GRANT: I don't think so. You need to read the story and see. Remember, I wasn't the sole writer on it; John Wagner and I wrote it in collaboration, and John is the *definitive* guy when it comes to Dredd.

BISLEY: He *is* Judge Dredd. I think if you're really close to a character for some years, your personality's bound to rub off on that character.

GRANT: Yeah. Dredd is quite heavily modeled on how John sees himself. Or, on how John would *like* to be.

CS: To what extent did the illustrations feed back into the words, and vice versa? Is yours a very symbiotic relationship?

BISLEY: With *Lobo* [Bisley and Grant's DC character], the creative process *is* symbiotic, because it's spontaneous; it goes back and forth. But with *Judgement on Gotham*, there was no time to do that, and I kept very tightly to the script.

GRANT: It was all broken down into panels with descriptions and dialogue. On *Lobo*, we start with a plot and Simon does the pencils. Then, I come back with the dialogue and he inks it. Anything extra he wants to add, he just puts in. If I'm working with a new artist, I put a sentence in the script saying, "This is the way I see it. If you see it differently, do it however you want, as long as it tells the same story." That's built in, particularly with Simon, because I was familiar with what he did for *Lobo* and what he added to that from the original vision. He brought another dimension to it.

BISLEY: Lobo's a great character because he'll do something like put on a dress and walk into a bar to get a reaction. Then, if anyone comments, he wraps his chain around their head!

CS: On the subject of violence: Judge Dredd has been criticized on this score. Is violence in your work performing some kind of cathartic function for you? In other words, if you two weren't comic creators, would you be out mugging little old ladies?

BISLEY: No, no, no. We're just the same as everybody else. I think we've all got violence in us, haven't we? But I can't *depict* violence unless it's tongue-in-cheek. I couldn't, for instance, do a woman getting stabbed and having blood all over the place. That's too real. On the other hand, two outsize, muscular guys in costumes beating the crap out of each other is funny.

GRANT: As far as real-life violence is concerned, I'm really squeamish. I can't watch those TV programs with doctors performing operations; I can't look at car accidents and stuff like that. It makes me physically ill. But violence in comics isn't really violence at all. It's between characters that don't exist. Anyway, I don't write just violence. I try to write *humorous* violence. The two have got to be together. For example, when Batman gets captured in Mega-City One by Dredd, he protests his innocence, so the judges move in with their day sticks and give him a good working-over. If that happened to someone in real life, it would kill him. But an hour later, Batman's up and escaping.

CS: A word about your working methods. Are you very schematic in the way you put a comic together?

GRANT: I'm not. In fact, at heart I guess I'm actually a verbal storyteller rather than a written storyteller. Comics are just my way of doing it. Had I been born 2,000 years ago, I would have been telling stories around the campfire when the darkness was pressing in and the demons were gathering.

I'LL TELL YOU SOMETHING ELSE... THE MASK -- THE COSTUME -- THE WEAPONS -- YOU KNOW WHAT I SMELL?
I SMELL VIGILANTE.
AND I DON'T LIKE VIGILANTES!
IS THERE ANY CHANCE I COULD SPEAK TO SOMEONE WITH A LITTLE INTELLIGENCE?
SOMEBODY LOOKIN' FOR ME?

Judge Anderson wasn't the only mediator when it came to giving Batman and Dredd equal time.

All Gotham Art: Copyright 1991 Fleetway Publications Ltd & DC Comics Inc.

All Batman & Associated Characters Trademark & Copyright 1991 DC Comics Inc.

Dredd and Batman reunited twice more in *Vendetta in Gotham* and *The Ultimate Riddle*.

BISLEY: That's interesting, because when I illustrate what you've written, I think I'm doing something similar; I'm just hearing the characters speak. I'm not really interested in what's going on around them.

CS: Alan, it was intriguing to learn that you once wanted to be a minister.

GRANT: I didn't want to be, although I did go to a college of divinity, yes. It's an involved story, but basically, I wanted to waste a few more years in college, so I put in for the ministry. I didn't complete the course. But I think I would have made a great minister. After four years' study, I would have gotten a car and a manse. Not to mention ecclesiastical groupies. I was quite looking forward to it.

CS: Did Christianity play into this?

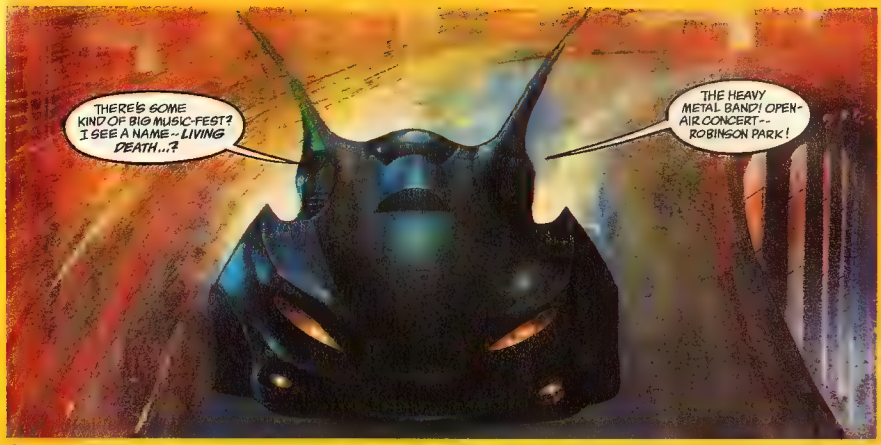
BISLEY: I'm meticulous in the sense that if I have the opportunity, I'll fully render a strip; that's to say I mold it until it becomes crisper and more photographic. But inevitably, I'm not going to have the time, so it's going to be a compromise to a certain extent. You try to make the artwork as best you can, obviously, but when you're working to a really tight schedule, it can look a bit tatty around the edges towards the end. So, what I do now is work backwards. I do the last 10 pages first, then go back and do the middle section again.

CS: Many creators of fantastic subjects talk about needing to suspend their own disbelief before they can convey that to their readers. Are your stories "real" to you?

BISLEY: It's real for me. Not literally real, but I like the idea of these things happening. I've got a lot of conviction when I'm doing it. When reading a script, you get involved, almost like watching a TV soap. You get quite tangled up with the characters, you know? They become a part of you when you're working on them. If Judge Dredd walked in this room now, I really wouldn't be shocked. To put it simply, you're enjoying it, so you *believe* in it.

GRANT: It's exactly the same with writing. If you're not into it, you usually end up with something boring. It's impossible to write a humorous story, for example, unless you can laugh at it yourself. John Wagner and I, when we write together, really get into the parts. We do the dialogue before the scene descriptions, which is opposite to the way comics generally function. We work more like it's a radio play or something. John takes one part and I take the other. On *Judgment*, he took the part of Judge Dredd and read his dialogue in a really *deep*, Dreddian voice, and I tried to do the same for Batman. We acted it out like a piece of theater. With humorous writing, that's a big asset.

New villains were conceived for *Judgment*, but it was decided that the Scarecrow and Judge Death made for a more effective story.



All Gotham Art: Simon Bisley

The writer notes that in addition to the Batmobile, the Dark Knight has an inner demon driving him.

GRANT: It didn't come into it at all because I'm not a Christian.

BISLEY: Good grief, it gets worse.

CS: So, we shouldn't look for any Christian subtext in your work?

GRANT: There is *no* Christian subtext running through my work. In fact, when I was doing the *Demon* series for DC, I made one of the principal characters a born-again Christian who ended up in Hell. His line was, "How can I possibly be in Hell? I'm a born-again Christian." But they made me write it out.

BISLEY: Anything religious in comics is always a *very* touchy subject.

GRANT: I don't have a problem with that. At the end of the day, the publisher's taking the financial risk. If he says, "Get that Christian out of there," you've got no option.

BISLEY: In *Judgment*, I originally had Batman wearing an inverted cross. But it had to go. I thought it was appropriate because the book is sort of heavy-metal oriented. And Batman's very demonic; he looks like the bloody devil incarnate. He appeals to the thrashers, the meatheads, the dustbinheads and the engineheads. It has to be heavy metal if we're talking in musical terms, hasn't it? In fact, I tend to work with pretty hard stuff playing on the sound system.

CS: Are you optimistic about the state of the comics business at the moment?

GRANT: I am *not* optimistic, because the industry is becoming increasingly marketing-led. Putting something out with five different covers on it is *not* bringing new people into the market; that only appeals to the hardcore collectors who have to buy five copies of the same book so they've got a complete collection.

BISLEY: There's nothing wrong with that.

GRANT: I'm not saying there's anything wrong with it.

BISLEY: So what's the problem? It makes you money, it makes me money, it makes the companies money.

GRANT: In the short term, it works, but in the long term, you're going to end up with half-a-million comic fans buying 10 copies of everything, and sooner or later, they're all going to say, "We're getting ripped off here." What I would rather see than five different versions of *X Men* or *Batman* is five new comics utilizing the talents of new creators.

CS

Judge Death ruled *Judgment*, but the Riddler poses *The Ultimate Riddle*.

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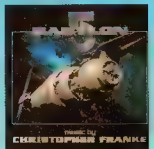

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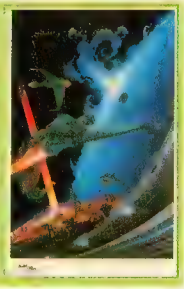

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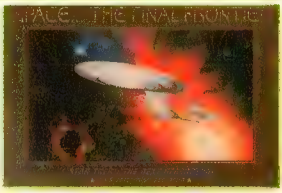

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RIDDLE ME THIS

It's no puzzle why Frank Gorshin is still remembered as the Riddler.

By KIM HOWARD JOHNSON

Batman Forever is on the lips of moviegoers this summer, in no small part because of Jim (*The Mask*) Carrey's portrayal of the Riddler. For fans of the '60s *Batman* TV series, however, there is only *one* true Riddler—the inimitable Frank Gorshin. Though it has been decades since Gorshin has worn the green suit, he admits that being identified with the Riddler for so long has had its ups and downs.

"I'm happy about it, and yet I'm frustrated in that so many people know me *just* from that," he confesses now. "But hey, you have got to have something—if I didn't have that, I would probably be annoyed too! So, I enjoy the recognition, even though there's going to be a new Riddler now. They didn't pay me the money he's making! Everybody's making more money than ever before, and Jim Carrey has certainly evidenced a lot of talent—he has done a lot of hit movies."

After years in show business, Gorshin explains that the Riddler made him an overnight success. "*Batman* was my launching pad. That's what *really* did it for me. Even though I did not make much money doing it, it was great exposure for me and gave me tremendous recognition. It was responsible for me headlining Vegas with my night club act—until that time I was always an opening act. Once *Batman* was on, I became an important commodity, and I could headline."

Gorshin was the first, and perhaps the most memorable of the *Batman* guest-villains. He admits that he wanted to make an impression in the show's two-part premiere in order to pave the way for return appearances. "That first one, 'Hi Diddle Riddle,' drew our biggest audience," says Gorshin, explaining that it was also his favorite episode. "I really got a chance to spread my wings, so to speak. I was trying to lay that character down for future consideration in the series."

The actor notes that the comics were helpful in developing the Riddler. "I had the comic book as a guide. I remember reading them and being fascinated by *all* the characters."

Perhaps the most distinctive touch Gorshin brought to the Riddler was his trademark laugh. "I knew that when I laughed, I *really* had to laugh, and not just do a phony laugh," he emphasizes. "I find that whenever I laugh genuinely at something, I get the sound that I used for the character."

Prior to *Batman*, Gorshin had done guest-starring roles in dramatic series, as well as working as an impressionist in night clubs. "I had been visible from doing shows like *Ed Sullivan*, *Steve Allen* and *Perry Como*, many different variety shows," he says. "But I had also worked as an actor. I had done *Naked City*, *The Untouchables*, *The Doctors*, *The Defenders*, a lot of guest-starring roles as an actor *prior* to playing the Riddler."

His dramatic acting actually led to the part. "Bill Dozier, *Batman*'s producer, asked me to do it," explains Gorshin. "I had done some things with him before, like *Naked City*. He was at Screen Gems at the time, and I guess he liked my work. So, when he went over to 20th Century Fox and had this *Batman* series in his hands,

he thought about me for the role. He asked me to come in, we talked, and he told me about the Riddler. I loved the idea, because I was a big fan. I read the *Batman* comic books when I was a kid and I said, 'Sure, I would love to do it!' And that was it."

The first *Batman* show, which featured the Riddler, was a two-part story, airing on subsequent nights; a cliffhanger ended the first half-hour. It was Gorshin's love of the *Batman* comics and the challenge of appearing on the very first show that made it special.

"Bill Dozier showed me the script," he explains. "The role was pretty substantial. It was the guest villain and I knew that this would be the pioneer show. I would be in the position to set the pace for the series. I liked that responsibility and I knew I could play the role. It was like it was predestined. When I was a kid, I never thought that I would end up playing that role, but there it was! I thought it was opportune. The script was written by Lorenzo Semple Jr., who's a very talented man. The script was exciting, and there wasn't anything more to consider—the money was good, and I was out of work and available!"

Because he was a comics fan, Gorshin wasn't deterred by wearing the accompanying costume for the role. "That's what the Riddler wore in the comic book—he had the green tights with the question marks all over him," he says. "I knew it was going to be something bizarre. It didn't bother me, because that was all a part of it."

Gorshin notes that he wasn't surprised at the outlandish look of the costumes and props when he showed up for his part. "I remember it being a case of 'I guess this was what I expected.' It was larger than life. What *was* a surprise to me was all the 'Pows' that they added in post-production. I didn't know that was going to happen, the 'Pow!' and the 'Biff!' and the 'Zam!'—I didn't know that was going to be done. It was nice."

It didn't take long for Gorshin to realize just how popular the *Batman* TV series had become. "The day after the first show aired, it scored!" he raves. "The ratings were unbelievable, and it meant immediate recognition for me, whether I was out on the street or anywhere else! Of course, I didn't know if it was going to last, but it smelled like it was going to have some longevity. As it turned out, it ran for three years, which is nothing compared to how long series run now, but it has enjoyed a bigger popularity in reruns."

Gorshin appeared as the Riddler in eight hours, or in 16 half-hour shows, as well as the 1966 feature film. The two weekly half-hours, separated by a cliffhanger, presented a format unique to the *Batman* series. "It was like the old chapter serials," says Gorshin. "I used to go to the theater on Saturday

Riddle me this! If you could fit TV Riddler Frank Gorshin's salary into this one box, how many boxes would you need for movie Riddler Jim Carrey's?

Gorshin didn't mind wearing his funny Riddler togs. "That's what the Riddler wore in the comic book. It didn't bother me because that was all a part of it."

Design & Layout: Jim McLernon

All Batman Photos: Copyright 1966, 1987 Greenway Productions & 20th Century Fox Television

mornings and they always showed you a serial. There were always 13 chapters, and at the end of each one there would be a cliffhanger, and you would look forward to coming the following Saturday to see how that was resolved—only to be hung up again for the subsequent Saturday!"

The actor notes that while he made occasional suggestions or comments on the script, there was very little improvisation on the set. "I don't remember ever being restricted, but it was such a stylized role—it's like ad libbing Shakespeare. You can't go on in *Hamlet* and ad lib it. You have to do the lines as written. There was such a style to this, it didn't lend itself to improvising. If I'm in *Naked City* and I'm playing a gangster, I'll say a lot of 'dese' and 'dems' and 'dose'—sometimes you pad a little bit, you know, you add some expletives. Not so with this thing—it was so stylized, I did it pretty much as written. I may have added a suggestion here and there, but there was not much ad libbing on my part, or anybody else's part in the episodes that I did. But I laughed a lot. I stuck those little giggles in wherever I felt it was appropriate!"

Appearing on *Batman* became a tremendous status symbol for a time, with some of the biggest names in Hollywood jockeying for a part either as a villain or a window-opening cameo bystander. "There were many people," Gorshin relates, "like Jerry Lewis, Sammy Davis Jr., Milton Berle, Anne Baxter—the list goes on."

Gorshin has fond memories of series star Adam West. "He was great—a nice fellow, a great sense of humor, and I thought he played that role beautifully. That was a tough line to ride. He was so careful, and it was so great—with his innuendoes and things—to walk that line and risk being corny, and on the other side, to risk being too straight—he traveled that road very well. I don't think they could have picked anybody better than him."

The actor didn't spend as much time with Burt Ward, though he admires his portrayal of Robin. "He had great energy, and that's what Robin needed," says Gorshin. "I didn't know him that well. Burt Ward was a younger guy, and we didn't pal around that much. Also of course, I did not pal around with Adam West that much, either, though we did have occasion to go out and have a few drinks every now and then. I only knew Burt Ward from being on the set with him. He had great enthusiasm for the role, and he was perfect for it."

The only opportunity that Gorshin had to spend time with other guest villains came during the *Batman* movie, because the TV villains all operated independently of each other during the series. He is highly complimentary of the rest of the rogues' gallery, but reserves special praise for the actor who portrayed the Penguin.

"I have always loved Burgess Meredith, no matter what he does," says Gorshin. "The only time I got to enjoy being with him was when we did the *Batman* movie. I had admired him for so many years. I think he's one of the great actors of our time. He's just brilliant, and I would watch him in awe. When you watch any great actor—when you watch Marlon Brando and you see how great he is—you can't help but be reminded of all the great things he has done. All those things come into play for me. I see Burgess Meredith, and knowing what he had done before—and subsequent to—that time, he's just a great talent, whether he's wearing a funny nose or not wearing any nose at all!"

The strange props and costumes used in *Batman* were much more impressive on the screen than in person, Gorshin confides. "When you see them on screen, the props look terrific," he says. "But, when you were actually there with the prop, it didn't look that terrific! When you were pressing those buttons on the monitors, it always looked so effective to see someone going from button to button and

"He had the enthusiasm for the role and I thought he was perfect for it," says Gorshin of his co-star Burt Ward, who played Robin.

Trek Photo: Copyright 1969 Paramount Pictures & Norway Corp.

In classic *Star Trek*'s "Let This Be Your Last Battlefield," Gorshin played an alien prejudiced against those with white and black sides the opposite of his.

see a blip on the screen or whatever, but the buttons didn't move—they were just little dots you hit, and so they were not really what they seemed to be. You were acting.

"The props were strange, even the car! When you heard the Batmobile on screen, it sounded like some supercharger with a jet engine, really streamlined and all by itself in the world of cars. But, there on the set, it sounded like a 1957 Lincoln—and we were shooting in 1966!"

Typecasting was certainly a problem following the series, Gorshin admits. "I guess so, yeah. We all look for something to be identified with, and I suppose it has gotten in the way of other things. It was such a bizarre role, and not far removed from the kind of thing that I do when I work in night clubs—I do impressions of stars, and those are funny things, and playing the Riddler was just another one of those impressions, and underlined the fact that I'm a variety performer more than an actor. I think it has gotten in the way of me doing some serious television and many dramatic things—I would *really* like to do more of that. But it's difficult for people to see me in that light after playing the Riddler, even though I thought in the beginning that it would give me great exposure as an actor who could do different types of things, because the Riddler *did*. The Riddler fancied himself as a Shakespearean actor, a genius, capable of feeling any kind of an emotion. But, even though I had the mask and the gimmicks and props, it didn't affect people in the business that way.

Though he had little input on the character's creation, the Riddler's trademark loony laugh was all Gorshin.

"I used to have a routine where I did Marlon Brando and Rod Steiger playing Batman and Robin, and another routine with Kirk Douglas and Burt Lancaster. Kirk Douglas was the Boy Wonder, and Burt Lancaster played Batman. There was a sequence where the two of them were sliding down the Bat-pole. It always took forever, and I had Burt and Kirk doing dialogue on the way down."

Though he never really tired of playing the Riddler, Gorshin recalls one week in which John Astin was brought in to fill in for him. "I was working in Chicago, where I had a club commitment," he says. "They wouldn't let me out of my contract, and the *Batman* people had to shoot this particular episode at that particular time. As much as I tried, I just couldn't get away to do it, so they reached out for somebody else, in this case John Astin—the surrogate Riddler. I never saw the show, though."

The Riddler in his riddle library. You didn't think he made them all up, did you?

The actor briefly became part of another cult favorite when he accepted a role on *Star Trek*. "It was the same time as *Batman*," he notes. "It was just after the first *Batman* episode had been on. The reason I did the *Star Trek* was because I had opened at the Century Plaza Hotel in Century City, and Gene Roddenberry had come to see the show—he was there for my opening night. We talked after the show, and he said he wanted to find an episode for me to do. Sure enough, he did! I was half-black and half-white on 'Let This Be Your Last Battlefield.' "

Gorshin says *Trek* fans still ask him today about his classic guest appearance on that show. "I'm approached quite a bit—not as much as the Riddler, but of course, that's indelible."

A young Gorshin had a brush with music history prior to his *Batman* and *Star Trek* roles when he was booked to perform his night club act on *The Ed Sullivan Show*—the same night a British rock group were making their debut. "That was strange," Gorshin says. "I didn't know what the Beatles were. I wasn't a rock-and-roll enthusiast and wasn't attuned to all that. But, a couple of weeks before, I was in Australia playing a string of clubs down there, when I heard that the Beatles had just left. I thought it was some kind of a pestilence! Then, I got to New York, and I had *The Ed Sullivan Show* to do. I was up in my dressing room, and there were *thousands* of kids out in the street. I thought, 'I can't be *that* popular!' Of course, I realized that they were there for the Beatles.

"It was actually one of my good shows. I followed the Beatles. They had been on and I followed them and thought I would have trouble, but it went very well for me. I never got to bump shoulders with them. They had such security around them, it was amazing! To see so many fans, and to have them there, and not know they were there until they were actually on camera!"

Gorshin continues to work regularly to this day. He recently shot a guest appearance on *Lois & Clark*, and starred in a Las Vegas production of *Guys and Dolls*. Even though it has been 30 years since he first portrayed the Riddler, he admits he still looks back on his *Batman* days fondly. "Everybody asks if that was a fun job for me. Sure it was—but so is every other job. Every other job working in this industry is fun—*Star Trek, Naked City, The Untouchables*—it's fun to work at what you like to do, whether you're wearing normal clothes or green tights. I didn't enjoy working on *Batman* any moreso than anything else, but I certainly enjoyed it as much as any other show I had done."

Still, he has been recognized in public ever since he first donned the Riddler mask and green tights.

"Even to this day," Frank Gorshin laughs, "People point at me and say, 'Oh, look, there's the Joker!' "

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The New E. Nygma

Holy cow and heavens to Betsy! It's rubber-faced Jim Carrey tickling the funny bone as the nefarious Riddler in *Batman Forever*. The rapidly rising Carrey, who toiled in low-budget filmdom—do *Once Bitten* and *Earth Girls Are Easy* ring a bell?—then scored big as one of the in-house members of television's *In Living Color* comedy ensemble. Then came the big-screen triple-whammy of *Ace Ventura: Pet Detective*, *The Mask* and *Dumb and Dumber*, three huge hits which turned Carrey (profiled in GS #45) into one of Hollywood's hottest properties.

How hot?

So hot that hardly anyone—*Batman*-ophiles or industry types—blinked when it was announced that Carrey and not Robin Williams, the leading candidate, would play the Riddler in *Batman Forever*. Carrey is positively thrilled about the project. "[*Batman Forever* director] Joel Schumacher liked *Ace Ventura*. He had already been interested in me for the Riddler, but he thought I was a little too young," admits Carrey. "Then, when he saw the trailer for *The Mask*, he changed his mind. He said, 'OK, this is somebody who can do a lot of different things. That's why I even got the opportunity to talk to him about doing it.'

Carrey, of course, had seen Frank Gorshin play the part to what most consider sardonic perfection and the last thing he wanted to do is copy Gorshin. Fortunately, *Batman Forever* goes into more revelatory character detail about the Riddler than the TV series ever did.

"The thing that's great about it is that within the script, you see where the Riddler comes from, how he's created. So, I'm just going to go with that and take it as far out there as I can," he promises, smiling just a bit evilly. "But I'm *not* going to imitate anybody. This Riddler will be *my* Riddler."

—Ian Spelling

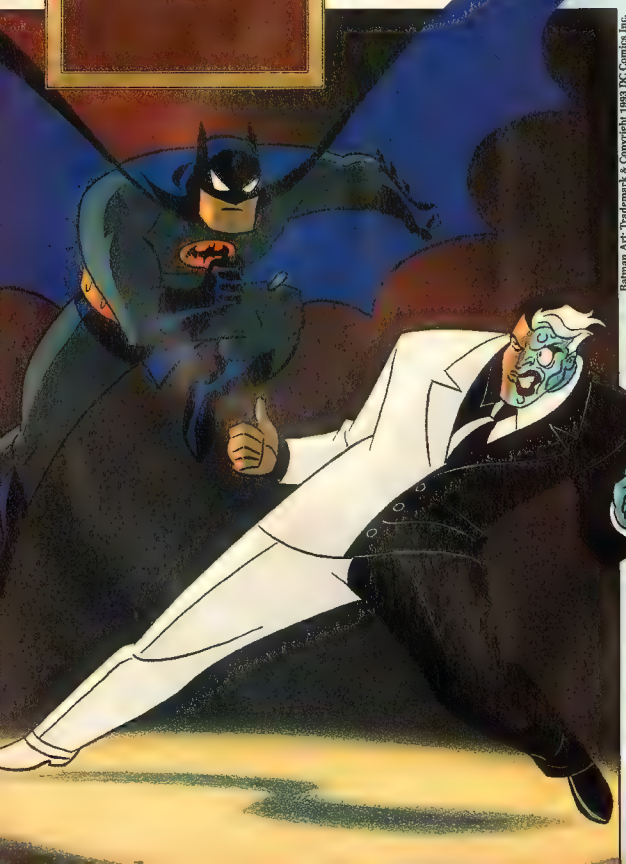
Jim Carrey presents the Dark Knight with a brand-new puzzle as the Riddler.

ANIMATED FACE

There are two sides to every story—and many sides to every actor. For example, take Richard Moll, whose face is best known to mainstream audiences as the bald bailiff Bull in the sitcom hit *Night Court*. But *Batman* fans and animation buffs know his voice best.

In *The Adventures of Batman & Robin*, Moll does assorted voices—including "a computer, a thug, a guard" and other small roles—but he was hired principally to provide the voice of District Attorney Harvey Dent, a.k.a. Batman's arch-villain Two-Face.

In animation, Richard Moll provides the menace for the Two-Face who confronts Batman.



Batman Art: Trademark & Copyright 1993 DC Comics Inc.

Explains Moll, "Dent gets acid spilled on his face and turns into this really horrendous character who says things like, [menacing, breathy voice] 'Forget the kid; it's Batman I want.' He has this low, growling voice. I guess some of the acid got on his vocal chords. He has a split personality, because half of his face is still the handsome Harvey Dent. The other half is all messed up."

Reportedly, Moll's audition was so effective that the entire *Batman* production staff stopped dead in their tracks upon hearing it. "Really? How cool," Moll enthuses. "I'm glad to hear it. Mission accomplished.

"I've done a lot of voiceover auditions, and it's tough to get in," he continues. "So, it was a delight to get something like *Batman*. When I first came in, they wanted more of a Marlon Brando kind of thing [he imitates what sounds like a slowly-dying Brando], so I did that. Then, when I started to read on the first episode, I was trying that, but it wasn't quite happening. So, I went into the voice I used for the sorcerer Xusia in *The Sword and the Sorcerer* [breathy, growling voice]: 'Why do you have need of me? You are a king with an army.' The producers said, 'That's it. Stick with that,' so *that* became the voice."

Moll (who discussed his career in STARLOG #188) takes a very straightforward approach to character acting. "You just to try to think the thoughts of the character and imagine the situation he's in," he remarks. "And perhaps substitute people you don't really like for the people you're talking to! You just get as nasty as you possibly can. You bring out your worst self and just go for it."

In Richard Moll's opinion, the animated *Batman* "has much to offer that's special. The graphics are extraordinary. It's almost like cartoons by Rembrandt. The stories are very interesting, too; it's an adult cartoon. They go pretty deep: They deal with tragedy and sickness and all kinds of strange things. It's *not* Tom and Jerry, let's put it that way."

—*Kyle Counts*

LIVE-ACTION FACE

Should he be good or bad? Two-Face (Tommy Lee Jones) will decide on the flip of his coin.

Once he was Gotham District Attorney Harvey Dent, and now, horribly scarred, he is not. Today, he is a creature of the night, half debonair civilization, half haunted nightmare. He is Two-Face.

And in *Batman Forever*, he is played by Oscar-winner Tommy Lee Jones.

Jones succeeds Billy Dee Williams, who portrayed the pre-Two-Face Harvey Dent in *Batman* but did not encore in *Batman Returns*. Somehow it seems appropriate that Dent, a character of such duality, has been played by two different actors in the live-action movies.

Of course, Jones is known to filmgoers as the relentless Federal marshal pursuing Harrison Ford in *The Fugitive* (for which he earned a Best Supporting Actor Oscar). Other notable screen work has included *JFK*, *Natural Born Killers*, *Cobb*, *Under Siege*, *Blown Away*, *Coal Miner's Daughter* and *The Client* (helmed by *Batman Forever* director Joel Schumacher). He won an Emmy for his portrayal of real-life murderer Gary Gilmore in *The Executioner's Song*. He'll next return to the comics scene investigating UFO sightings alongside partner Chris O'Donnell in the comic book-derived adventure *The Men in Black*.

Now, his face split by the frightening makeup crafted by Rick Baker, Jones epitomizes what Batman creator Bob Kane terms "a symbol of Jekyll and Hyde," the good and the evil sides of Harvey Dent, the man called Two-Face.

Batman Forever Photo: Trademark & Copyright ©1995 DC Comics

The Man Who Laughs

Dealing mayhem as the Joker, Mark Hamill is all smiles.

By KIM HOWARD JOHNSON & ELIZABETH GUNDERSON

Mark Hamill says his voice-over career is a dream come true in many ways. "I'm sorry that I missed out on that whole Golden Age of Radio," he muses. "My generation of actors never got to do that, and the closest thing would be animated voices. They cast you for the way you sound, *not* the way you look. At first, it's a little disconcerting to realize casting directors are turning their heads as you're auditioning, but if not for that, I don't think I would have snared the role of the Joker!

"Having read about the animated *Batman* series in the *Comics Buyers' Guide*, and the fact that they were emulating the Max Fleischer *Superman* cartoons, and being an animation buff, I said, 'This could be really good!' They're going to tell 65 stories, they're going to do it very *noir*, Dark Knight-ish—I told my writing partner that we should get in and pitch villains that they hadn't done in the Adam West TV series or the Tim Burton movies. It turned out that most of the stories were already assigned by that time, but I wound up doing a voice in 'Heart of Ice,' where my character is responsible for Michael Ansara becoming Mr. Freeze. I was very impressed by the script; it was very melancholy for children's animation. I promptly forgot about it, because my original approach was as a writer.

Jedi Photo: Albert Clark • copyright 1982 Lucasfilm Ltd

Once a Jedi, comics fan Hamill is delighted to voice the Clown Prince of Crime.

"They called me six weeks later and asked me to audition for the Joker [initially voiced by Tim Curry, who left the role]. I did, and I eventually got it. When I auditioned, I *really* wanted it, and when they told me I had it, I thought, 'No, what did I get myself into?! He's too big an icon! I would much rather have done Ra's Al Ghul or Clayface—somebody where people *didn't* have expectations!' "

Hamill didn't think about competing with past Jokers Cesar Romero or Jack Nicholson until he actually got the part. "Then, I thought, 'What kind of fool follows Jack Nicholson in *anything*?!' " he laughs. "Not only that, but I had a set of all the Adam West *Batmans*. I was a big fan of the TV show—I know that's heresy to some people, but there are some fantastic performances on that show. I'll never forget Frank Gorshin as the Riddler—I did homages to him as the Trickster on *The Flash*!"

As the middle child of seven, Hamill can't remember a time when comic books weren't part of his life. A diverse collection of books, from *Superman* to *Little Lulu*, were widely passed around and traded, read until they were unreadable and even then too beloved to throw away. On long car trips, Hamill and his numerous siblings were given money to buy what they wanted, and comic books always topped the list.

Since his father was in the Navy, the family moved often and collections frequently underwent secret parental pruning, causing many books to "disappear" before a move, with the comics' absence discovered only when the children reached their new home.

Design & Layout: Jim McLernon

When the family got transferred from Virginia to Japan, Hamill had grudgingly whittled down his number of books to a 4 1/2-inch stack, but he was still determined to ensure that they would show up in Yokohama instead of at Goodwill.

"It would always be at the next stop when you got transferred that you said, 'Gee, what happened to my Dennis the Menace puppets?' and they would say, 'Oh, you're too old for them, we gave them away to the poor kids.' I wasn't going to let this happen to me again, so I got up after everyone went to bed, went down to a box of already-packed kitchen stuff and slipped them in. When we got to Japan, my mom opened the box and found the comics. She was cool and said, 'Oh, I think *these* are *yours*, just don't let your father find out.' That's a stack I still have."

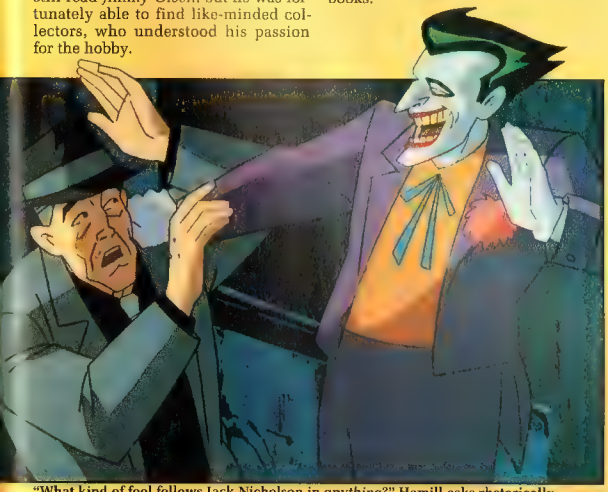
Ironically, long before he had to perfect the Joker voice for animation, Hamill had a special affection for Batman. "I love the fantasy of Superman," he observes, "but strange as it sounds, I used to think Batman was fairly realistic. He didn't have superpowers, he was just incredibly wealthy. As a kid, I thought you could train yourself to the physical perfection that he did and devote yourself to science and detective work and get all the gadgets and fight crime, and it just seemed to me that it was possible."

Hamill's parents tried to shame him out of his comics at a certain age, by smoothly goading, "You're much too old for this, c'mon." He laughingly admits that in the throes of adolescence, he didn't want girls to know he still read *Jimmy Olsen*, but he was fortunately able to find like-minded collectors, who understood his passion for the hobby.

...the maniacal laugh that earned Mark Hamill animated status as the Joker.

All Batman Characters & Art: Trademark & Copyright 1993 DC Comics Inc./Courtesy Warner Bros.

"I remember in Virginia just sitting in the basement of a friend's house for hours and hours reading comics, not conversing. The most you talked was, 'Hey, have you read this *Hawkman*? It's really, really good'—and we traded books."



"What kind of fool follows Jack Nicholson in *anything*?" Hamill asks rhetorically.

Now, with three children of his own, Hamill has passed on his fondness for comics, although they view the industry in a different way. His four year-old daughter enjoys being read *Archie* and *Little Lulu* at bedtime, with voice-trained dad doing all the characters like her own personal radio show. Hamill's sons, however, ages 10 and 14, are full collectors, heading straight for the bagged selections upon entering a comic book store.

Hamill sighs in paternal defeat and says, "They're concerned about the value of their books in a way I *never* was as a kid. In fact, I've tried to tell them that there's nothing wrong with acknowledging that the books can increase in value, but that's no reason to pick one title over another. Buy what you like, buy what you enjoy. There's nothing more frustrating than seeing 11-year-olds going in and buying these things that are never going to come out of the bag."

After almost 20 years as an actor, Hamill was finally able to combine his career with his hobby, first by playing the Trickster, then by laughing it up as the Joker. "One of the first letters of complaint we got after Fox started airing the series was from the mother of a kid who was really scared of the Joker, which I took as a *great*

(continued on page 82)

Photo: Lisa Orris

"I was born to play her," says Arleen Sorkin, the inspiration and voice behind the animated *Batman*'s cute-but-crazy Harley Quinn.

By PAT JANKIEWICZ

Quinn-tessential

Arleen Sorkin gets a kick out of being Harley Quinn, the Joker's "Hench Wench."

She looks normal. Sitting in a trendy Hollywood café, she comes across as a witty, spunky, sweet, wise-cracking blonde who has spent some quality time in front of television and film cameras. What the other patrons of this café don't know is that Arleen Sorkin has a criminal past.

As Harley Quinn, Sorkin has played the Joker's put-upon girl friend, a psychotic clown (and former psychiatrist) on *Batman: The Animated Series*. With her bone-white skin, dazed Judy Holliday-voice, one-sided love for the Joker and odd quips like, "It is too laugh," Harley Quinn has become one of the series' most beloved characters.

"I see Harley as a girl who wants to do the right thing, but it's just *not* within her control," Sorkin observes. "She wants to be a good girl but it's so much more *her* to be a bad one. I think she's popular because of her vulnerability."

The actress landed the role in an unusual way. "I slept with Paul Dini," she jokes. "Actually, Paul and I have been friends since college—back at

Art: Mike Parobeck/Rick Burchett

Though some might just tell her to "Get over it," Quinn's demented brain is fixed tight on her one-sided love for the Joker.

Emerson. He was home one day watching *Days of Our Lives* [a soap on which Sorkin appeared]. We did a dream sequence where I was a court jester and he said that was the inspiration for Harley. Paul called me up and said, 'Would you like to do this character?' I said yes and came over! I was born to play her."

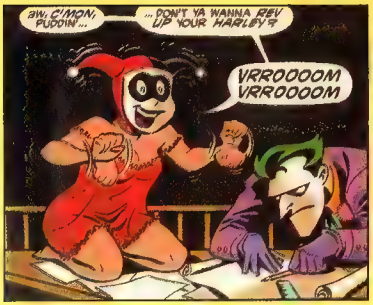
One wonders how the performer felt about having a character tailor-made for her. "It's completely flattering," Sorkin says fondly. "Knowing that makes it a joyful experience to play her. I don't feel I'll ever be re-cast, so that's good too."

Sorkin sees several similarities between Harley and herself: "Her naturally blonde hair is certainly *not* me! Her occasional use of the word 'Oy!' is very much me, that fantastic figure is also me, as is her *joie de vie* and those high, pointy breasts!

"I love the name Harleen so much, that if I had to do it over again, I would have made *my* name Harleen instead of Arleen. It's a great name!

"Doing *Batman* has been terrific. When we talk, I know Paul's not really listening to me—he's filing; filing

Art: Bruce Timm



Outside the confines of Saturday morning cartoons, Dini and Timm had more freedom to flesh out the Harley Quinn character.

away ideas while I'm talking to him!"

She has nothing but praise for her "Mr. J." "Mark Hamill is a great guy. My ex-boy friend, Charlie Wessler, worked with Mark on *Star Wars*. Mark, Charlie and Carrie Fisher are all friends, so when I walked in and saw Mark, I knew him from parties! When I saw him do the Joker, I was wildly impressed. He's an amazing talent, there's nothing he can't do. He also has a great comic sense.

"The joke of it is, I would be so engrossed watching him do the Joker that I would forget to pick up my line! Mark stands up so you can see him and I would be watching him, then it's like, 'Oh, my turn.' He's just so interesting to watch when he's playing the Joker."

She found Kevin Conroy (Batman/Bruce Wayne) to be "a very nice man. I don't have any personal relationship with him, but I like him very much. I think his underplaying of the role is brilliant."

Of all her episodes, Sorkin points to two all-time favorites. "My first is 'Harley and Ivy.' I love it because there's a great relationship between Harley Quinn and Poison Ivy. Anybody who has ever had a girl friend obsessed with some guy, and you just wanted to tell her to 'get over yourself' can relate.

"I also love all her stuff pertaining to the Joker. I thought it was cute when Harley did the drawing of the Joker's face in her salad. I also liked working with Diane Pershing [who voices Poison Ivy] very much.

" 'Harley's Holiday,' where Harley gets out of prison, is my other favorite. I suggested that one to Paul. When I was on [the Fox TV series] *Duet*, my character was a thief. I thought it would be a funny running gag if she wore outfits with the security tags still on them. They didn't take the idea so I brought it to Paul; the idea of having Harley walk out of a store wearing a dress with the tag still on. The security thing goes off and she's worried she'll go back to prison."

Sorkin remembers "The Laughing Fish" episode "because that's where I threw Batman in the shark tank. I got a lot of pleasure doing that," she grins. "It made me feel tough!"

In "The Man Who Killed Batman," Harley Quinn and the Joker eulogize the Dark Knight in an unusual way. "That was the episode in which I got to play 'Amazing Grace' on the kazoo. I practiced it in the car on the way to the studio," Sorkin notes. "I remember during taping it was hard not to laugh, but I did it in one take. The minute it

Art: Bruce Timm

The twisted relationship between the Joker and Harley was explored further in Dini and animated *Batman* artist Bruce Timm's *Mad Love* graphic novel.

At Sorkin's suggestion, Paul Dini wrote "Harley's Holiday," in which our heroine tries to go straight and does a little shopping with her pet jackals.

Batman & Related Characters ™ & Copyright 1995 DC Comics Inc. Selected Art: Courtesy Paul Dini

Art: Bruce Timm

"She wants to be a good girl, but it's so much more *her* to be a bad one," observes Sorkin.

was over, I burst out laughing. It was hysterical just to be able to whimper through a kazoo! I can now put 'Kazoo' under special skills on my résumé," she jokes.

"Almost Got 'Im," where Harley is going to drop Catwoman into a catfood meat grinder, "was an episode that I thought had really great writing. It was also very funny."

In "Lock-Up," Sorkin only had a cameo. "Not enough material!" she smiles. "I love the confession in 'Trial'," the show where criminals put Batman on trial for 'crimes' against them. "I really enjoyed my breaking down on the stand!"

Harlequinade," in which Batman and Harley Quinn form a reluctant truce to capture the Joker, "is another favorite because I got to sing," she states. "We were going to a recording and I was singing in front of Paul. It's an actual song called 'Say That We're Sweethearts Again,' from *Meet the People*, an old MGM movie.

"I used to use it as an audition song back in New York and I knew Paul would think it was funny, so I sang it to him. That's when Paul decided to use the song—most people think he wrote it because nobody had ever heard of it before! I have it in my jukebox.

"It's a song about a woman who'll put up with anything in an abusive relationship. 'I never knew that our romance was over until you poisoned my food,' " Sorkin sings. " 'I thought it was a lark when you kicked me in the heart, but now I think it's rude!' It's a really funny song from 1930. Paul made it happen—he bought the song!"

According to Dini, "It took a year before I found a graceful way to get that song on the show. I finally thought, 'Harley has to provide a distraction, how about we have her sing and just put the song in?' It's the one musical number we'll ever do on *Batman*!"

Sorkin feels that Harley Quinn's giant cult following "is more a credit to Paul than to me. Harley is totally Paul Dini & Bruce Timm's invention. Other than a few ideas from me, it's all them. I'm just an animal in a glass booth. *They* make it happen, they create it.

"It's really fun. Not that many people know or even recognize that it's my voice," she admits. "I'm working on *Pride and Joy*, a good, fun show, and I wore the jacket—Paul gave me a jacket with Harley on the back—and this guy was going *nuts* over it.

"When I told him that I was Harley's voice, he was delighted. I guess the credits go by so fast, you don't know who does the voices. He was just so impressed. The fact that I'm producing a TV series meant *nothing* to him, but the fact that I had actually voiced Harley Quinn made me a goddess!"

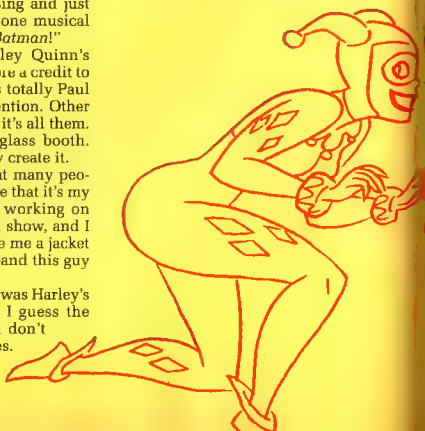
Some fans view Harley as a hip take-off on the molls seen in TV's *Batman*. "I used to watch the Adam West series and I really liked it, but I would say Harley is more inspired by the molls in old James Cagney movies—and *Guys & Dolls*' Adelaide."

Before *Batman*, Sorkin's first animation job came when "Paul hired my then-writing partner Beth Milstein and I to write two episodes of *Tiny Toons Adventures*. My first animated voice work was Harley. It was great fun because so much of my acting work has been built around my hair, my earrings, my hats and costumes. On *Batman*, I could come in looking like a total dog," she giggles. "It was really a treat! I like to say, 'What I've lacked in talent, I made up for in accessories!' Harley was the one job where I didn't have to rely on that at all."

The daughter of a dentist, the Washington, D.C.-born Sorkin debuted onstage very young. One of her first gigs came "when I danced as an elf with the New York City Ballet in *A Midsummer's Night Dream*. I fainted at my Bat Mitzvah, so I got out of show business soon after that," she laughs.

"During my senior year in college, the head of the Theater Department told me, 'Go to New York, give it six months to two years, and if it doesn't work out, then you should teach.' He was probably going to every person in the room and saying the same thing, but I took it as," she lets out a melodramatic sigh, " 'He *sees* something in me!' I went to New York and started with a comedy group called 'The High Heeled Women.'

"We had a lot of success and I did a



lot of commercials and radio spots. In New York, I was an extra. Because I was also a shoe model, I had these gold lamé boots. Anytime they needed a hooker, they would call me because I had those boots! I was a hooker in movies like *Fort Apache: The Bronx*," she says demurely. "You've seen me leaning into cars in numerous films!

"I'm also in *Trading Places* with one line. [Director] John Landis has been a big supporter. I got the line in a weird way—I was an extra with a lot of cleavage. John came by, took a look and said, 'We've gotta do something with that cleavage!' He built a whole moment around me and my very large, pushed-up breasts," she smiles. "Way before the Wonderbra, I knew how to work it!'

Batman isn't the only genre hero with whom she has partnered. "I was married to Q," she explains, "I guess that makes me 'Harley Q!' John de Lancie was my husband on *Days of Our Lives*. We had many blissful years of marriage together and we're still very good friends. I have a great story about John.

"We were the misfits on *Days of Our Lives*, but he was even worse than me! On his last day, he was leaving the show and wanted to go see *ALIENS*. John said, 'We have some time between the first camera block and dress rehearsal, let's go to a movie.' I didn't want to go, but it was his last day and I wanted him to be happy.

"The *real* reason John wanted to go," Sorkin playfully reveals, "was that on Hollywood Boulevard, it was only a dollar if you went before noon! So, we go running to the theater. We watch almost the whole movie and *ALIENS* has like *10* endings! My heart is pounding, but after the second ending, I said, 'John, we *have* to go.' He would not leave, so I got mad at him and said, 'I'm going to the back of the theater and you better come because we're gonna be late for work and you're gonna get me fired!'

"I ran to the back of the theater and I'm waiting and watching, thinking he'll follow me, and he *doesn't* come," the actress laughs. "I can't take my eyes off the screen because it's so compelling, so I walk back and finally sit behind him. Another ending goes by and just before the climax, I put my hand on his shoulder and loudly say, 'JOHN, WE HAVE TO…' and it *wasn't* John! It was some poor man, sitting all by himself. When I grabbed him, he stood up and screamed; I scared the shit out of him!"

John de Lancie's *Next Generation* work reminds Sorkin of her childhood. "When I was little, I loved the original *Star Trek*, especially Susan Oliver in 'The Menagerie.' She was so cool in that. I always wanted to have someone say, 'Arleen Sorkin: No mortal man can resist her.' When I started *Days of Our Lives*, somebody wrote *TV Guide* and asked if I was her daughter! It was the most exciting day of my life; someone actually thought I even looked like Susan Oliver!"

Her future looks busy. Besides producing *Pride and Joy*, she's even more happy with her latest project. "I just had a beautiful son, Eli Jonathan Lloyd," Arleen Sorkin says proudly. "I'm completely relying on Paul to introduce him to the world of animation. I've decided that I'm gonna start him on black-and-white Mickey Mouse cartoons!"

Art: Ronnie Del Carmen

"There's a great relationship between Harley Quinn and Poison Ivy," Sorkin says.

According to Sorkin, the similarities between Harley and herself are "her *joie de vie* and those high pointy breasts."

By PAT JANKIEWICZ

Writer/producer Paul Dini helped add animated evil to Catwoman, Poison Ivy & Harley Quinn.

Batman: The Animated Series boasts some of the most unique females on television. While some other shows feature weak-willed women in need of protection, *Batman* features a vast array of assertive and unusual women, ranging from the noble Batgirl and self-reliant Poison Ivy to the dependent, deranged Harley Quinn.

"They're interesting characters to me," writer/producer Paul Dini observes. "For example, I think a villainess' needs are different than those of a villain. They want to prove different things—perhaps to themselves and to the world. The female characters in *Batman* are all rather strong and they don't listen to anybody as far as telling them *how* to accomplish their goals."

By far, the show's breakaway female character has been Harley Quinn, the Joker's mad lover. Harley is probably the most dysfunctional character to ever appear in a cartoon. "She has an interesting origin," Dini states. "I had a birthday party several years ago and my pal Steve Dunnington couldn't make it, so he sent a stripper, unaware that people had kids and babies there.

"A gal dressed as a policewoman says she's there to 'read me my rights.' She handcuffs me to a chair and proceeds to undress while I'm watching my boss, [animation producer] Tom Ruegger, usher his little ones out! She was really sassy and funny and it was such an embarrassing moment, I thought, 'I really gotta use this somewhere!'

"When I was writing 'Joker's Favor,' I wanted someone to attack Commissioner Gordon at this banquet and I remembered the 'policewoman.' Naturally, I didn't have her undress, but I decided the last thing you would suspect is a policewoman. Using her meant the Joker has a girl working for him; the only other option was putting the Joker in drag, which would have destroyed the moment.

"I began to wonder, 'What kind of girl would work with him?' She would be messed up, which makes her automatically more interesting. What's her story? It's also kind of like the '60s *Batman* TV show, where each of the guys had a henchgirl. I thought we could do a little bit more with her."

Dini also recalled a *Days of Our Lives* fantasy sequence starring his friend Arleen Sorkin. "She was in a two-tone Pied Piper outfit, white face and a little jester cap. I said, 'That's really cute; I must use that!' When I thought of Harley, I remembered Arleen's clown and said, 'Maybe something like that…'

"I came up with this 'Harley Quinn' character and [fellow producer/designer] Bruce Timm did this really nice, clownlike design for her. We also

Photo: Courtesy Paul Dini

"The female characters in *Batman* are all rather strong and they don't listen to anybody as far as how to accomplish their goals," says animated series writer/producer Paul Dini.

gave her good lines. Some of her lines parody the '60s show. When Batman nails her, Harley says, 'I know—you're thinking, "What a poor, innocent creature led astray by bad companions," ' which is what Adam West always used to say. But while she says this, Harley is grabbing for a knife. Little things like that made her special.

"Also, adding little wisecracks is very much the way Arleen talks. We're close friends and she's the queen of wisecracks. I added a lot of wisecracks I picked up from Arleen. When we were thinking, 'Who are we gonna cast?' I thought, 'Why not Arleen?' She's a comedic actress and did a great job."

He enjoyed modeling Harley after a real person. "The fact that she's a friend made it easier to write," Dini states. "It was also fun. When we see her without makeup, she gradually began to look a little more like Arleen. Bruce began to draw with models of her out of costume and, whether consciously or unconsciously, he began using little elements of Arleen.

"It's fabulous to look at, he really pulls off dramatic sequences," notes Dini of Bruce Timm, who drew the pair's acclaimed *Mad Love* graphic novel.

"Sometimes Arleen will tell a story and I'll remember little things and file them away. She told me this great story about her and Dana Delany at the San Diego Zoo, sassing a guy on the tour bus, so I'll be using that someplace."

He also found that the character was independent. "We realized we couldn't put her in *every* Joker story, so we dropped her out of a few on purpose; you don't want to water down the Joker either. We said, 'Let's see if she's strong enough to carry one on her own.' That's why we did a couple with just *her* in the spotlight."

Art: Bruce Timm

Art: Bruce Timm Batman & Related Characters: Trademark & Copyright 1995 DC Comics Inc.

If Harley is weak, her polar opposite, Poison Ivy, is strong. The comic book character was re-developed for the series into a brilliant, willful eco-terrorist.

"Poison Ivy is pretty self-motivated; there's what she wants and the rest of the world doesn't really matter," the writer explains. "It's her aims and her goals—if she wants to steal something, she'll steal it. If she wants to terrorize people for cutting down a forest, she'll do it. She's not one who takes 'No' for an answer.

"In the episode where she wants a family, she wants one that loves and dotes on her the way her plants do, so she just creates a family out of her plants. That's kind of sick," he concedes, "but it's also understandable and logical, given what her character's about. With her twisted nature and what she wants out of life, that makes more sense to me than if Poison Ivy were off stealing a lot of money just for the sake of stealing.

"You can treat her like your basic criminal type, but why not try to broaden the character a little bit? Look at what Ivy's motivation is. She's sterile. In a story Denny O'Neil wrote called 'The Poison Tomorrow,' Poison Ivy tells somebody she can't have kids. I liked that; she's this sort of evil Earth Mother-type character, a demented Queen of the May.

"On the other hand, if her body is set up to kill any outside infection that comes into it, she can't get pregnant, so I think of Ivy as tragic. That was the motivation for 'House and Garden'; she

Unlike her '60s TV counterparts, the animated series version of Catwoman is more than a match for Batman in hand-to-claw fighting.

wanted a family and her only way of doing it was to create one for herself out of the means she uses by mixing around DNA and plant material. To me, that's a good motivation."

Dini teamed the two characters together in "Harley and Ivy." "It works because they're a contrast—the hard-ass and the idiot," he explains. "Ivy is the one who must keep them focused on their goals and stick with their plans, while Harley is the space cadet. She's more prone to wander off.

"They're friends because no one else will have them, so they're sort of thrown together. They're also a good contrast. Despite everything that happens to them, they actually do like each other. They also work well as solo characters."

One of Dini's favorite solo episodes was "Harley's Holiday." "It's the wackiest *Batman* we've *intentionally* done. I think that episode is as light as we could play those characters and still keep their integrity. Even then, it may have crossed the line. Batman is pretty much of a Boy Scout in it, trying to keep Harley from getting into too much trouble.

"That episode was our attempt to do a screwball comedy. I think we pulled it off; Harley's personality carries it. [Director] Kevin Altieri and I plotted out much of the episode thinking, 'How much stuff can we load into a half-hour?' Kevin is the Cecil B. DeMille of cartoons," the writer notes. "He's like, 'Tanks! If we have a tank, we've got to have helicopters and fighters!' 'No, Kevin, just the tank! Be lucky you got that!'

" 'Harley's Holiday' was partially in response to Fox's request that we lighten up the show a little bit. They said, 'We would like Robin in every episode and we would like the shows to be a little less on the dark and gritty side.' Naturally the way to do that, rather than make Batman a funny character, is to put in characters who are funny and can carry the action around them, which is what we did. We didn't want to make Batman himself silly," Dini says.

Catwoman is a very strong character," Dini says. "At one point, we talked about doing *Batman*-related spin-offs; a *Catwoman* series or a *Robin* series. I don't think those are going to happen at the moment. Catwoman is so strong, she could work *without* Batman. Bruce and I came up with a really good development for her. We take her out of Gotham City and treat her like an adventurer."

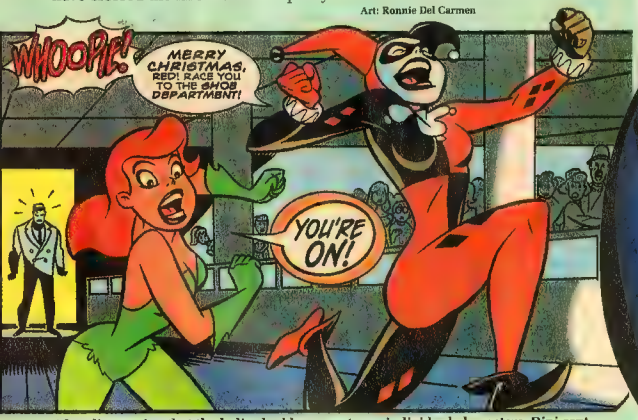
In the proposed series, Catwoman is a freelance thief/adventurer. "That makes her a deadly seductress. In a *Catwoman* series, we could really open her up and make her everything we didn't have a chance to make her on the show. Catwoman is really interesting and we would have been able to do much more with her. There was talk of both *Robin* and *Catwoman* shows, but the one we *really* wanted to do was *Catwoman*.

"I wrote only one, really strong Catwoman story, but I like it a lot. It's called 'Catwalk' and in it, she's still trying to be good as Selina Kyle and it's really taking a toll on her. She's at a party with Bruce Wayne and she mouths off to the hostess, she's mean to Bruce and just walks out because she feels very confined by the fact that she can't be Catwoman anymore. She made a deal with the judge; she can't wear the suit or prowl around at night, so it really gets to her.

"When Scarface says, 'I got a little job and there's no risk of you being caught,' she does it. There's some really terrific animation in that episode. When Scarface offers her the deal, I don't know how they did it, but they got every emotion in her face. She does not say a word, she just thinks about it. but you know in her heart she's saying 'Yes.' She goes back to being Catwoman for this one job and it's a set-up."

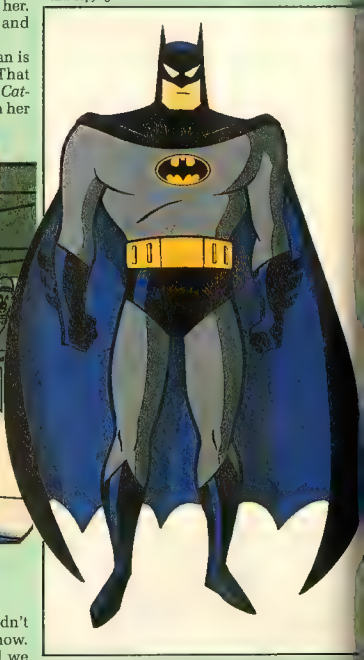
Dini and Timm re-teamed for another superhero project, the forthcoming *Freakazoid*. "What happened with that was, Steven Spielberg wanted to do a show in the *Batman* mode. Steven had seen *Batman*, liked it and was interested in doing an action/adventure show like it. We came up with a number of concepts, like a period piece/*Indiana Jones*-styled development, a couple of space stories, some futuristic *Blade Runner*-type stories and one that was a contemporary teen adventure built around a young superhero.

Art: Ronnie Del Carmen



After discovering that the ladies had become strong individual characters, Dini sent them off on their own in episodes like "Harley and Ivy" and in a Holiday Special comic.

Art: Copyright 1993 DC Comics Inc.



"To keep Batman effective, we keep him silent and kind of dangerous," Dini explains.

"The concept was, 'If you were a shy kid in high school, what would happen if you could suddenly turn into this super-powered, manic, crazy adult?' We came up with something that was in the mode of the early Stan Lee/Steve Ditko *Spider-Man* stories. This shy, quiet kid really likes being a shy, quiet kid but now he turns into something that's a cross between the Joker and the Hulk, a super-powered, raving madman—who fights for good.

"We don't really know why he's fighting for good, he just is. Freakazoid is an outrageous, uncontrollable character, everything the teenager is *not* and in a more adult body. That was the original concept and we were handling it as a superhero show. But Steven found he liked the basic idea, but really wanted to see more comedy.

"After we wrote a couple more scripts, he said, 'Not bad, but still not there yet.' I think he was really looking for *Animaniacs* in tights. Short cartoons, a lot of jokes, with a lot of craziness going on. He wanted it looser, funnier and hipper and wanted it to break all bounds of reality. That's what *Freakazoid* is now. Bruce and I are not producing.

"It was an action/adventure show that mutated into this comedy. At this point, it has changed considerably from what Bruce and I intended. I'm going to write a couple of episodes to help out. After that, there's talk we'll do *Superman* next, which I would like to do."

The writer is also penning this year's *Batman Adventures* annual, to be drawn by Timm. "We're doing a Ra's Al Ghul story because he's an interesting character. He has been alive for 600 years, so you would figure he has met other characters in the DC Universe. Let's just tell a story from his past.

"It involves a meeting in Ra's' past with Jason Blood and the Demon. Batman's in it, but it involves a mystical battle over the centuries between Ra's and Jason Blood over a mystic tablet that Ra's wants but Jason tries to keep from him. It culminates in Gotham City during the present day as Batman, Blood and the Demon take on Ra's for this magic tablet."

Dini was pleased by the reaction to their first graphic novel, the acclaimed *Mad Love*. "I was very happy and surprised. It was better than Bruce and I hoped for! I worked on it so closely that when people tell me, 'I really like this or that line,' I think, 'Oh God, I stayed up until 2 a.m. to come up with that!'

"The other thing is, how do I top it? I don't think I can," he admits. "I can write other interesting stories that are fun, but *Mad Love* seemed to have this core rooted in real obsessive, psychotic emotion and that's what carried it off and made people interested.

"It's fabulous to look at. Bruce pulls off action scenes better than anybody, but he *really* pulls off dramatic sequences. Another artist would say, 'I have to draw the boring stuff. I'll just crap it out because I don't want to draw straight talking,' but Bruce really got into the psychoanalyzing scenes between Harley and Joker. He played them superbly."

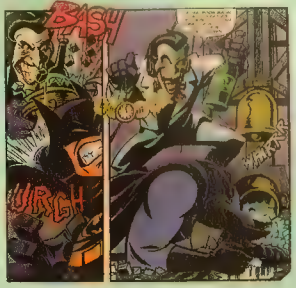
The Dark Knight's animated influence has led to further superhero shows. One, Ben Edlund's *The Tick*, affectionately pokes fun at various heroes. Batman is spoofed by Die Fledermaus, a pointy-eared hero who talks like Kevin Conroy (voice of the animated Batman) and likes to strike poses more than criminals. "I thought Die Fledermaus was funny," Dini says.

"Their show is clever and fun. I think *The Tick* is more a superhero genre parody with a Batman character than a deliberate parody of our show. If they wanted to parody us, they would have to do it visually as well. It's clever and fun.

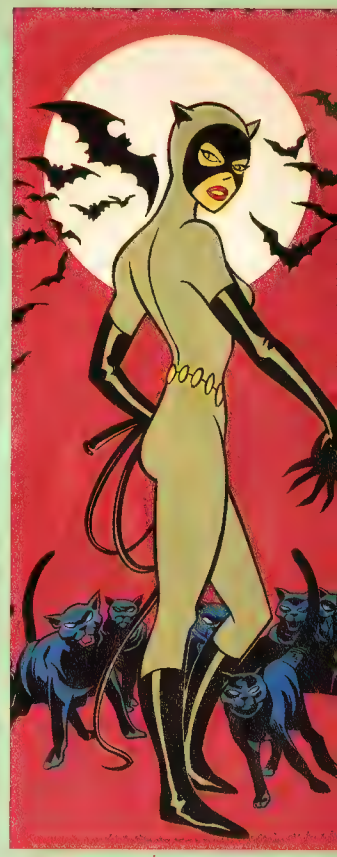
"*Spider-Man* is a good attempt to translate the comic to the screen. That's obviously what they set out to do; they looked at the comic and took it no further than that. As a casual observer and lifelong Spider-Man fan, I would have liked to see them take more chances with Spider-Man. It's easy to play armchair producer, but I watched the first couple of episodes with the spider-slayer robots and thought, 'Their focus is on the big robots, not Parker and his relationship with his aunt or the other characters.'

"I'm not sure Spider-Man talking all the time is a good thing. To make Batman effective, we keep him silent and kind of dangerous. I would like to see Spider-Man a little more like that. I know the show's a big hit and some episodes look great. The Lizard episode played really well and reminded me of 'On Leather Wings' [the *Batman* pilot] in more than one way."

Art: Kevin Altieri & Butch Lukic



Teaming with animated *Batman* director Kevin Altieri in the *Batman Adventures* Holiday Special, Dini brought the Dark Knight face to face again with the Joker.



"We take her out of Gotham City and treat her like an adventurer," reveals Dini of a possible *Catwoman* spin-off show.

As for the future, "I'm writing a *Harley and Ivy* comic book mini-series. Bruce will draw it and we plotted out the stories together. It's three fun issues of the girls off on their own causing trouble! There's a vague through-line in all of them, but they're really three separate adventures.

"We liked the 'Harley and Ivy' episode and thought, 'Hey, we can easily bring these characters back and we don't need Batman to be a big part of it.' It's just going to be these two gal pals having fun and fighting with each other, messing around. I just finished the first issue of *Harley and Ivy* and sent it in to DC yesterday. Bruce read it and said he can't wait to start drawing it. It's gonna be great," Paul Dini smiles mischeviously. "The girls take a two-page shower!"

Design & Layout: Freddy Collado

The most often-asked question about *Batman: The Animated Series* is, "When are new episodes going to air?"

Twenty have been made for the second season, but most won't see broadcast until the fall, a *year* after a second season would normally begin.

Why has the Fox Network waited so long to renew its two-time Emmy winner?

Producer Eric Radomski is as baffled as any on the *Batman* crew. "I don't know why, 'cause the series was number one; it did great; it held the position throughout the whole season and into [ratings] sweeps for February [1993]. Some of the episodes were in their second or third run. Everybody was going, 'Well, why don't they order more? What's going on?' We never really got the final answer as to *what* the delay was."

It wasn't until late April 1993 the Fox ordered 20 new episodes. But there wasn't enough time to make them for fall broadcast. So, Warners pulled five first season episodes and ran them that September. Five second season episodes are supposed to air this May: "Trial," "House & Garden," "Avatar," "Sideshow" and "A Bullet for Bullock." Fifteen will air on Fox's Saturday-morning schedule this fall, with a minute trimmed per episode in a retitled format called *The Adventures of Batman & Robin*.

As for a third season, "They still have the option to order more, but I don't know if they're going to," Radomski says. "It may have to do with budget. It's an expensive series but you get what you pay for.

"I *have* heard gossip that action/adventure isn't like a comedy series where you can see it two or three times and pick up on the jokes. Once you know the plot of an action/adventure show, you really don't need to see it again unless you're just a big fan. *That* might have something to do with it," Radomski speculates.

KNIGHT VISION

That master of dark deco, Eric Radomski, looks behind the mask of the animated Batman.

By BOB MILLER

Photos: Bob Miller

Guiding the animated Dark Knight's present and future, producer Eric Radomski takes *Batman: The Animated Series* into a new season.

With the series airing on Saturday morning, will Fox's Broadcast Standards & Practices (BS&P) be more restrictive about the show's content?

"The BS&P concerns were put to sleep after the series was successful," Radomski replies. "They're still always going to watch for blood and the really extreme violence, but we've found methods for getting around that stuff. We know they're going to cut a percentage out, but there's a certain percentage they'll leave in.

"We got away with *plenty* in the first season. There are plenty of fights. Just really dramatic and intense scenes that come off stronger than when we would actually show a death scene.

"The death of Robin's parents is the best example. You don't see anything. It has everything to do with the staging and things that BS&P has no control over: the post-production mix, where you have sound FX and this crowd noise going and this really emotional music, and people just get caught up in that and it's like 'Holy cow! This kid's *parents* died.' But, you never saw *anything*. You saw them fall off-screen and that was it. Everyone reacted and everyone *knew* it happened, but you didn't *see* it. So, there's that little bit of trickery that we did to get our point across."

With *Batman: Mask of the Phantasm*, the crew didn't have to contend with the network's BS&P. Instead, they had to consider the movie ratings system. "They [Warners] wanted us to definitely keep the film 'PG.' We shot a Leica reel of the whole film and ran that for the executives, and for Jean [MacCurdy, head of Warners Animation] and the crew," Radomski says. "By the time we got to the final mix, they had a preview screening for the kids and parents and then for teenagers. It was to our benefit because the kids loved it; the parents loved it, and they had no problems with the violence or the storytelling. As a result, they recommended the film.

"But, to keep it within a 'PG' rating, the only thing they suggested was toning down sound effects in two areas: A tombstone falls and kills one of the gangsters, and it sounded, they felt, too crunchy," Radomski chuckles. "They didn't want to hear all of the bones crunching.

"Later, the Joker is fighting Andrea, and he belts her on-screen three times. They wanted those punches toned down—not animation-wise, but sound-wise, because they were crunchy.

"That's pretty much the only limitations they put on us."

KNIGHT VISION

Radomski was the mastermind behind Gotham's visual style. "I laid in these big, flat areas of black and did the simple lighting on the buildings. It's vintage detective."

"I don't care for the Riddler a whole lot," states Radomski. His directorial debut was also the Riddler's bow, "If You're So Smart, Why Aren't You Rich?"

Radomski says. "We had one scene after the first rough cut screening where Batman gets clipped by this autogyro. The overseas animators had a little bit of fun with it. Blood squirted out of his arm, and when it flew out, it made a web-like shape, so it hung up in the air a little while, and they thought, 'Well, that's too much.' We agreed. He still gets cut and blood still comes out, but it goes away quicker.

"In the film, we have gunfire galore, a couple of murders and characters smoking (the bad guys smoke). Bruce Wayne gets 'laid' for the first time, which is kind of cool. So, we did pretty much everything we *wanted* to do for the film. As far as I'm concerned, it's done *much* more tastefully than a lot of Japanese animation, and even some live-action films where it's just violence for violence's sake."

After four weeks in release, *Batman: Mask of the Phantasm* grossed about $5 million, much less than the crew had expected.

"I'm personally disappointed at the way it was handled once it left the animation studio," Radomski says. "The film opened across the country, on 1,400 theaters, which we were excited about, but it didn't show in the evenings. That affected it in a big way. It could have done much better had it been promoted and advertised as a *real* movie, and let people have the opportunity to go and see it. I don't know all the rhymes and reasons for the studio choosing to distribute the film the way they did, but that's something you have no control over. You make the film; you do the best you can."

Despite those disappointments, it's anticipated that *Phantasm*'s home video release next month will do quite well, and a sequel has been discussed. "The latest I've heard is it's *not* going to be a Christmas, but they're definitely interested in doing another film. Warners is currently in the running to create the fifth network. If that happens, our division will be swamped with work. They're still in the process of assembling a really good feature idea—in terms of Disney quality, budget and time. They're looking for the correct material, and they haven't found it yet," Radomski says.

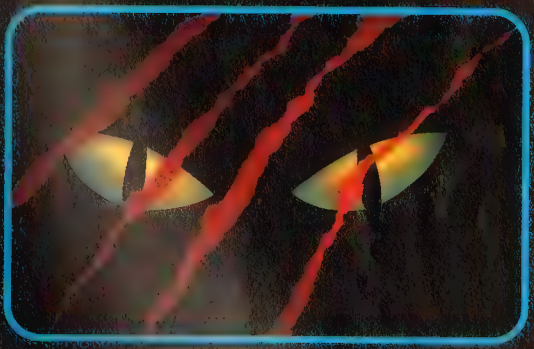
Meanwhile, *Batman*'s TV success has "blown open the doors" of opportunity for Radomski, as it has for his fellow co-producers, Bruce Timm, Alan Burnett and Paul Dini. "Before this, I was in this business because I liked to do art work. And now, people are looking at it and going, 'Hey, this is cool.' You've established yourself as somebody who knows what they're doing and can put out a decent product, and it gives you some credibility—people listen to you when you're trying to get a point across," Radomski says.

"I never knew I had many of the things in me that have emerged through the series," he says candidly. "I knew the basics and the technical end, but just being involved with a whole group of talented writers and great artists has made me a better artist, and I look at things with more open eyes."

He adds, "As far as my personal life, I'm pretty anonymous and I like to be that way. I have a wife and a son, and my time is *my time*. I'll work my butt off when I'm here and I have taken work home, and thanks to my wife I'm being so understanding about that.

"But the interviews get old after awhile. You get sick of telling the same story. Who really cares about this? But I guess many people really *are* interested. It's not that I want to be famous. I just want to do my work.

"So," he explains, "that's why I feel strange accepting credit for establishing our style. It's true that I was the initial springboard, but without all the people who influenced this project, it wouldn't be what it is."



"Basically, we were *filmmakers*," reminds Radomski. "We weren't just making cartoons. We were doing these as individual little films."

Radomski's entry into showbiz is an example of what he calls "The Hollywood Story": Succeeding through perseverance, hard work, meeting helpful people and being at the right place at the right time.

"I had always wanted to get into animation," he says. "I'm from Cleveland, and there's not much animation in Cleveland, so I studied as an artist. I made three trips to California at about 19 or 20, and I was completely humiliated, not being able to find work.

But Radomski had learned of another Cleveland native working in the Los Angeles area: actor/composer Will Ryan, who was doing voice work for Rick Reinert Productions on *Winnie the Pooh and a Day for Eeyore*. Will Ryan then introduced Radomski to director Dave Bennett, who introduced him to Reinert—who, as it happened, used to have his studio in Cleveland, and still had an ink-and-paint unit there, headed by Gretchen Heck and Bev Chiara. Radomski was given their telephone number. Back in Cleveland, he got an entry-level job with the unit.

"The *Pooh* film was my first big piece of animation work," he says. "I was just hand-inking and stripping cels. I learned everything from the bottom up, which was great. It was a priceless education."

While in Cleveland, Radomski also worked for Ennis McNulty and John Gibel, doing commercials for about two years, until Dave Bennett offered Radomski a job in L.A. For three-and-a-half years Radomski assisted Bennett with storyboards and layouts, assisted Reinert with background painting and did some cel work. After leaving Reinert and freelancing for six months, Radomski joined Warner Bros. full-time. "I was going to make good money, and I could paint all day long. And that," Radomski says, "is exactly what I did."

After the first season of *Tiny Toons*, Radomski explains, "the studio had specific properties they wanted to develop: *Gremlins*, *The Griswolds* [based on the *National Lampoon's Vacation* characters], *Taz-Mania* and *Batman*. I did samples for each proposed idea, just to have some part to do with a new show. Jean MacCurdy really liked my version of Gotham City. And Bruce Timm basically did a one-sheet Batman design, just a whole body shot and a couple of poses and head shots, and that's what we pitched."

MacCurdy asked Radomski and Timm to produce a two-minute promo piece, to test their capabilities and see how

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KNIGHT VISION

"It's true that I was the initial springboard [for our style], but without all the people who influenced this project, it wouldn't be what it is," maintains Radomski.

the show might look. Meanwhile, Warner Bros. provided backing for a full 65-episode *Batman* series. To Radomski's and Timm's surprise, MacCurdy appointed them as the show's producers. "Neither Bruce nor I had ever produced a series before, let alone 65 episodes, *let alone* such a high-profile property as *Batman*," Radomski says.

"When we did the promo, we talked about what we wanted to do. Bruce did the storyboards and the character designs, and I was doing the backgrounds. We knew where we stood right there. I knew I wasn't gonna sit down and draw characters; I just felt that I was more of an organizing-type person. I could gather people together, get the word out on what we wanted to do, and in the meantime, Bruce could start thinking about his version of Batman. I know the character, but I'm not necessarily this religious believer in the character. Bruce was more involved in the story and the acting performances. I was probably more in the technical, stylistic end, and getting things done on time as well as we could."

While Timm dictated the character style, Radomski designed the background style, starting with a black surface and then adding layers of light. "I laid in these big, flat areas of black and did the simple lighting on the buildings and that was the springboard. Once they saw that it worked, everybody started going through their references of New York City, which has lots of older buildings. It's vintage detective. [Architect] Hugh Ferris was a great influence on the series. They brought in this art deco influence and then we went into *Mr. X* comics, saw the big, bold, simple designs and said 'God, that's us, too.'"

Radomski credits Timm and background supervisor Ted Blackman with the art deco feel and the simplified graphic look. "The real benefit to that kind of working relationship is that when you have as good a crew as we do, you allow a great deal of freedom. For the most part, everyone really has the same thinking on the show.

"Basically, we were filmmakers. We weren't just making cartoons. We were doing these as individual little films. I'm not sure most people understand the complexity of getting a film done, especially for animation. The process is just endless."

Although Radomski and Timm "jelled" as producers, they encountered difficulties with a story editor who felt the show needed a different direction. As a result, many early episodes were message-oriented and stressed "pro-social" values.

"Because of our lack of experience, management felt we needed somebody who had done some of this before," Radomski says. "We never had the same attitude toward what the series should be. It was the story editor's opinion that it should be more pro-social. It could be violent and whatever we wanted it to be, but that doesn't mean Batman has to always have the episode's end quote and say, 'Kids, go up to your rooms and brush your teeth,' and all that crap.

"Batman's character motivation is simple—just do whatever it takes to get the point across. That doesn't mean lecturing or being a great philosopher about life. He just says, 'you're doing wrong—*don't do it.*'"

Another challenge was in convincing the writers to avoid the bane of TV animation: excessive dialogue. "Bruce and I always felt that way, completely separate from each other, that cartoons are *way* too chatty. You just want the characters to *shut up*. You don't need Batman talking throughout the whole episode. It's more interesting for him to walk into a darkened room, open up a file and let the audience read it, than for him to go, 'Hmmmm. I wonder what's in that file cabinet?'

"When you look back at some of the older cartoons, they did stuff *exactly*

This fall, the Caped Crusader hits the Saturday morning circuit in a re-tilled format called *The Adventures of Batman & Robin*.

We got away with plenty the first season, notes Radomski.

Hey, Joker! You've just been picked up for a second season by the Fox Network, and you've won at least two Emmys. What are you gonna do now?

like that, where a character is telegraphing everything he's going to do. How stupid! Batman doesn't need to do that. He's a detective. He doesn't need to give away all the information," Radomski says.

So, to trim excess dialogue and allow for more action, the producers wanted scripts in half the standard length for TV animation (one instead of two pages per screen minute) 50–30-page scripts instead of the normal 60. Writer-director relations also improved when veteran story editor Alan Burnett (CS#29) came on board as a producer.

"We really all had the same kind of approach in mind," Radomski says. "We didn't want it to be just action/adventure. We didn't want Batman to *always* be the hero. Let's not just have him go out and beat up the bad guys and he's always the winner. That's no fun. Let's really get some heart and soul into this thing and make these characters come to *life*, instead of just doing another merchandisable episodic series. We wanted them to be dramatic mini-features."

Because of the hectic production schedule, Radomski and Timm were pushed into directing episodes themselves. This became Radomski's first foray as a director.

"The studio wasn't very interested in hiring another director to pick up those extra seven shows. So, Bruce and I said we would do them, and we just basically added them to our normal workload. But it's fun to take something from a script stage and make it your own," he says.

"I would have *loved* to have done a whole bunch more, but it was way too burdensome once we started mid-production on the series. We were getting shows every week and having to edit and retake, and then mixing finished shows and still doing pre-production on others. It was a killer, but fun at the same time. I would love to be able to focus either on producing or directing. Doing both at the same time on a big series like this one, you never feel like you're doing your best."

"We did pretty much everything we *wanted* to do for the film," says Radomski, pointing to Bruce Wayne's on-screen romance.

Radomski cites his influences as "everything from *Little Rascals* to *Outer Limits* and *The Godfather*, which had this great impact on me when I was 11 or 12. But even with those things in mind, I always try and approach things fresh. I don't want to come in and say, 'Well, use this shot from this movie.' I just try and do whatever the script influences me to do."

Regarding his first episode, "If You're So Smart, Why Aren't You Rich?" Radomski says, "it came off OK. I didn't like the script [by David Wise] at all. I still don't. I hated the title. I *tried* my hardest to get it changed, but Alan Burnett wouldn't budge.

"We just couldn't convince the writers that the Riddler might set something up as simple as a bomb in somebody's office. It had to be complicated. So, that posed a real problem because you have 22 minutes to establish the character, and they suddenly put in these complex riddles that Batman must figure out. And, of course, he immediately figures them out, and that destroys the whole mystery of Batman as a detective, because all he does is think for a minute and he has the answer. That really didn't work for me, but I did the best I could with it.

"I had fun with it and unfortunately, we were trying out a studio in Spain—La Piz Azul—and that was their first [and last] episode. So, it comes off real cartoony compared to other episodes. It was fun to do, but not one of my favorites.

"And I don't care for the Riddler a whole lot. If there was an opportunity to work with him again, and I had complete say over that character, I would treat the Riddler as we do the Joker, where in reality he's a mean bastard. He uses his wit, but it's not the main thing he relies on, which is his ability to dominate."

With Paul Dini's "Almost Got 'Im" (in which various Bat-villains explain how they almost destroyed the Dark Knight), Radomski had better results. "It played well, which I was happy about. The dialogue is really snappy. Paul did a great job in the transitions as far as writing. Each character has his unique dialogue which really sells the story and keeps you involved. You never get confused."

TM Batman Characters & Art. Trademark & Copyright DC Comics Inc.

Then came "Mudslide," the final appearance of Clayface. Radomski describes this episode as "a *blast* to do. We had written 50 scripts so far, and everybody was running out of ideas. Alan came up with this idea about Matt Hagen: The chemicals are wearing thin and he's basically dying. This woman comes into his life and tries to help him because she has been in love with him since his early days in the movies. And then when Alan started talking about *really* using Clayface for what animation could do with him, I just got so excited, I couldn't wait to work on it.

"Clayface ends up consuming Batman within his body and he's gonna kill him, and Batman uses the grappling hook to blow his head off. It was just a *beautiful* opportunity to really get extreme in what we wanted to do with it, because Clayface was a big monster. We didn't have as much problem with the network saying, 'Well, you can't do that 'cause this is a human being.' It looked like a big flabby mass of goo on the storyboards, so the network never got too crazy about it. We ended up killing him at the end. Basically, he melts in the ocean. He disintegrates and he's dead."

The twist is that Batman is actually the story's antagonist, because he prevents Clayface from becoming normal. "We thought that Batman is a real bastard in the episode, but he has a couple of lines where he has made an effort to save Clayface, and if he doesn't want to be saved, Batman can't let him go on, because he's gonna hurt somebody some day. That's the justification," Radomski says.

"But it was a whole lot of fun to do, an opportunity to take complete advantage of animation. You buy the fact that Batman's gonna die inside this guy. You think he's suffocating and he's really gasping for his life. It does get pretty intense. You don't see stuff like that done all the time on television."

As it turned out, Studio Junio animated "Mudslide," not TMS, which had animated "Feat of Clay, Part 2," and chose to pass on further *Batman* assignments to work on *Animaniacs* instead. "We had six or seven studios at one time working on the show," Radomski notes. "Die-hard fans can tell the difference; *we* can definitely tell the difference, but I don't think the general viewing public notices.

"We've had a couple of studios [Akom, Sunrise] that we've had to dump after awhile because it was just a consistent problem getting what we wanted and having to fight over it and not seeing anything get any better. We had to do some shuffling as to where we were going to get the best production done, and we just managed to get through it somehow.

"It would be nice to be able to get production back in the States, but I don't know when that will happen, as far as television goes, because it's just too expensive to do it here. Eventually, I would like to think that we'll get to a point where things will even out and we can train more people and do more of the animation here.

"But for the time being, we must learn how to work with the overseas studios, and help them to understand our culture more," Radomski says. "I think that's why many Japanese films never really made it here. There has never been an animated film that has done close to what Disney films do. It's a whole different kind of storytelling and approach to films, and people just look at them and go, 'God, this is a really long and boring story.'

"I don't know if we would have done the *Batman* film the same way for a Japanese audience. There's a Warner Bros. division in Tokyo that distributes films internationally, and they ran the series there, and for the first few months, the network took surveys and found that the kids liked it because it was animated and they thought it was kind of cool, but they didn't quite understand what Batman was. They're not able to relate to this vigilante—is he a good guy or a bad guy? They didn't know.

"Americans would think, 'Well,

(continued on page 82)

All Batman Art: Courtesy Warners Bros.

The *Batman: Mask of the Phantasm* feature film was an exciting experience for Radomski. It gave him license to push Batman beyond broadcast limits.

Conroy

(continued from page 25)

She said she had an outtake reel she put together [*chuckles*] that she was taking home with her.

So, in this film, what do they name the girl friend? Andrea.

CS: In the film, both you and Mark Hamill play younger versions of your characters. How do you alter your voice for an earlier age?

CONROY: You can't make them too different where it's not believable for the same character. For example, young Bruce can only be a little different than mature Bruce. When I was 17, my voice had already changed. My voice wasn't quite as deep as it is now, but it was pretty deep, so when you're playing these characters in their 20s or in their teens, there's only so much that you can change your voice.

CS: How do you perceive Batman, personally and as a role model?

CONROY: The important thing to come out of this experience for me, and that I would want the audience to get out of it, is that out of Bruce Wayne's very dark experience, he makes a *positive* choice to change people for the better—to do something good, rather than feeling sorry for himself or doing something negative. He always does something positive. It's a great metaphor for people to use in their own lives. It's certainly one I try to use in my life: To always leave a situation better [after] you have encountered it.

That's why people get into Batman, because he's ennobling. He brings out the better parts of people. We would all like to do that, but for some reason we don't. If people just take the active choice and *do* it, everything would work out so much better.

After the troubles in South Central [Los Angeles] last year, I threw a broom in the car and went down and helped clean up. And there were all these people who had come from all over LA and Southern California. Everyone was there shoveling the debris and sweeping the streets, and we were interacting with the people living in that neighborhood. It was a bonding that should have happened *years* ago. It should happen every *day* in our lives. We should be a part of each other's lives. Why not?

It was just this *myth* of separation that people live through. It's me vs. them, or us and them. People don't understand that we are all in it together, it's the same thing. Every group, every town, every city—if you look at other people as not being different than you, but the *exact same*, just another aspect of you, then everything will work out better. And that's what Batman is about. CS

Radomski

(continued from page 81)

that's easy. How basic can you get?' But it's not that easy. It's a cultural thing. It needs some explaining. They're used to having stories told to them the way they do, as much as we have," Radomski says.

Warner Bros. wanted to follow *Batman*'s first season with a direct-to-video feature, *Mask of the Phantasm*, which Radomski says was basically "an expanded episode. We boarded the script and did all of our designs and shipped it overseas. We were treating it with more quality, but we originally didn't intend for it to be on the big screen."

Spectrum in Japan did the layout and key animation; Dong Yang did the rest. Then, Warners called and announced the switch to the big screen—which meant the visuals had to be re-jiggered to accommodate widescreen theatrical aspect ratio.

Other hurdles included the time factor. From start to finish, the movie had to be completed in eight months to meet the December 25 release date. Although the budget was increased to around $6 million, the studios had to pool their resources to give better-quality animation for the big screen.

"We weren't working with seasoned veteran animators from Don Bluth's studios or Disney," Radomski points out. "These guys were good, but they hadn't done too much feature work for the States. They really rose to the occasion. All things considered, it's a really good film."

On the other hand, Radomski says, "I don't want to set a precedent that a film of this quality could be done in this amount of time. It's not fair to us or to the product. You put a studio through the wringer, and you go, 'How can I criticize what they did, because they got it done in this amount of time and it looks fine.' We're really proud of what we did." *Mask of the Phantasm*, in its current video incarnation, is refined from the movie version with a thousand feet of retakes.

For Eric Radomski, the fascination with animation is that "it's completely fabricated from nothing. It comes from a pencil and paper and by the time you get to the final product with the sound FX and music, people think it's *real*.

"That's the biggest plus in doing this kind of work," he says. "If you can really make that happen for people, you know you're doing something right. If you can really buy into it or be moved by it or somehow it affects you, that's great. That's the biggest compliment that anybody can give someone making animated films. I'm glad to hear compliments like that." CS

Hamill

(continued from page 65)

compliment," he confesses, rather more than happily. But it wasn't Hamill's dedication to Batman as a comic book character that earned him his chance at giving children nightmares. After playing Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart on tour for a year in *Amadeus*, he perfected a high-pitched, annoying laugh that he utilized when auditioning for the smiling villain.

"Apparently," he says, "that's what got me the part, the laugh. One thing that's great about doing the character is he's just such a rich loony."

Batman: Mask of the Phantasm (now on video) gave Hamill another chance to spread his wings as the Clown Prince of Crime. "They pretty much handled the Joker origin in the Tim Burton movie, but in our continuity, the Joker did *not* kill Dr. and Mrs. Wayne—that was purely an invention of the movies," he says. "*Mask of the Phantasm* is our take on Batman's origin. My Joker is anything but subtle, so when he appears halfway through the movie, he's much like the Genie in *Aladdin*—he's just a burst of energy!"

After finishing 13 episodes of the series as the grinning baddie, Hamill is still incredulous about the types of restrictions his character must accommodate, right down to the inability to say "killed" on an animated show. "So you're the man who *iced* Batman," he notes. The mildly homicidal voice begins again, "So you're the man who *whacked* Batman." Within the same breath Hamill has returned: "Whack? A Mafia term is acceptable in place of 'killed'?"

Hamill's biggest regret in voicing the Joker is that he hasn't been able to do it enough. He's happy, though, that Hollywood has finally done it right.

"*Batman* has been a dream come true," he says. "For writers, they *finally* got people who have written comic books as a livelihood to work on the show. When TV producers buy *Wonder Woman*, they usually hire a couple of *Hawaii Five-O* writers! And now, I think for the first time in an animated series, they have people with comic book backgrounds. You wouldn't think it's that unusual, but it is.

"What they've done with this series is about as much as we comics fans can hope for," Mark Hamill says, "and I think it's setting a trend. They're about to do *Spider-Man*, and *Batman* is the standard against which everything else is judged, and that's good for us because there's a copycat mentality in Hollywood. Isn't it better for them to copy the *good* stuff?" CS

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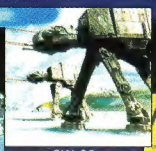
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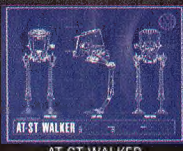

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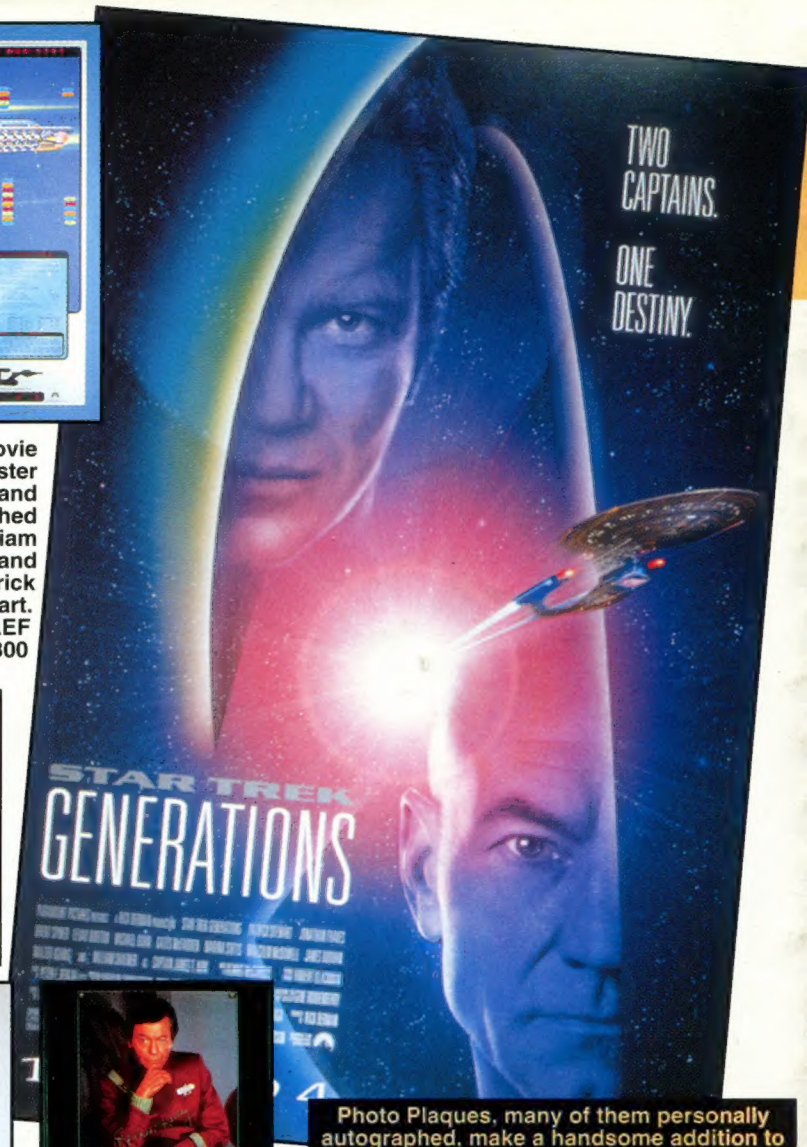

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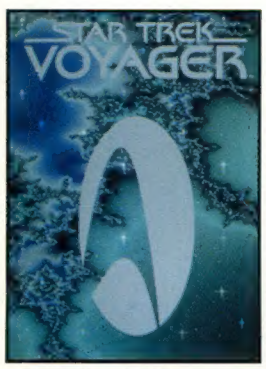

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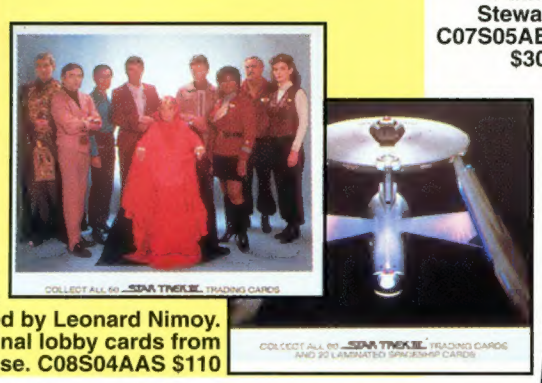

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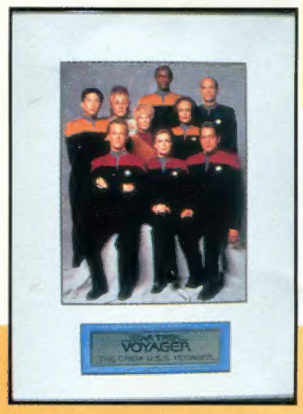

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